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Although early modern scholars often believe the female body to hinder women's authorship, my dissertation, *Embodied Female Authorship in Early Modern English Literature*, argues that the female body enables authorship. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, authorship and its related terms, "author" and "authority," were never static. Such malleability resonated with early modern perceptions of the female body as inherently shifty, a troubling notion to patriarchal ideologies that desired authority over women. Constituting male authorship through the female body was a way to stabilize masculine authority. Men became authors while women remained passive texts.

My project, however, disrupts this patriarchal narrative of authorship. Drawing upon scholarship by Jeffrey Masten, Wendy Wall, and Margaret Ezell that rethinks early modern authorship as gendered, collaborative, and social, I shift focus away from the physical production of texts to consider authorship in terms of the generation of narratives--textual, historical, political, and theological. I examine common tropes of the female body (maternal body, female martyr, wife's corpse, and female ghost) to restore "author" as a verb rather than a noun. Doing so historicizes female authorship as integral to gender, political, and religious hierarchies. Covering a wide generic breadth of texts ranging from the early Reformation to the Restoration (1546-1664), my project provides nuanced close-readings of women's and men's writing to illuminate the ubiquitous nature of embodied female authorship throughout early modern culture.

My first chapter uses the metaphor of the pregnant male wit who labors to birth literary creations to re-read representations of the maternal body as producers of theological narratives in midwife manuals, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing*. Subsequent chapters reveal how the female martyr grounds religio-political narratives of Protestant Reformation in England; how the wife's corpse offers narratives of chastity to correct those of sexual infidelity; and how the female ghost in Lucy Hutchinson's *Memoirs of Colonel John Hutchinson* yields a restorative, spiritual narrative in the face of the Restoration. By locating authors in unsuspecting places, I imagine a more inclusive early modern authorship that bestows agency upon those subjects who most seem to lack such authority. My project proves that we must look to the female body to understand the full history of authorship.

EMBODIED FEMALE AUTHORSHIP IN EARLY  
MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

Lauren Shook

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Approved by

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## APPROVAL PAGE

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**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION:**  
**DEFINING EMBODIED FEMALE AUTHORSHIP**

Early modern authorship was an embodied process. In the seventeenth century, an increasing number of printed books included an authorial portrait as part of the frontispiece, making visible the authorial body responsible for the text; notable examples include Ben Jonson's *Workes* (1616); Milton's *Poems 1645*, and Margaret Cavendish's *Nature's Pictures* (1656). Poets often equated their poetry with children and vice versa. Jonson laments in "On My First Son" that his son was "'his best piece of poetry;'"<sup>1</sup> Robert Herrick proudly claims that his verses "are the children I have left" and "no verse illegitimate;"<sup>2</sup> and Cavendish asks that readers not "condemn" her for "mak[ing] so much ado / About this book, it is my child."<sup>3</sup> The human body and books are one, and the body is used to construct authorship.

Early modern authorship specifically requires the female body. In Sir Philip Sidney's opening sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella*, the speaker laments writer's block through the metaphor of a mother in labor: "Thus great with child to speak and helples

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson, "On My First Son," in *Seventeenth-Century British Poetry 1603-1660*, ed. by John P. Rumrich and Gregory Chaplin (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), line 10.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Herrick, "Upon His Verses," in *Seventeenth-Century British Poetry 1603-1660*, ed. by John P. Rumrich and Gregory Chaplin (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), lines 3, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cavendish, "An Apology for Writing So Much upon This Book," in *Seventeenth-Century British Poetry 1603-1660*, ed. by John P. Rumrich and Gregory Chaplin (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), lines 1-2.

in my throes, / Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite: / ‘Fool,’ said my Muse to me, ‘look in thy heart and write.’”<sup>4</sup> Although male, Sidney takes on the role of the heaving mother in need of assistance to deliver his forthcoming sonnets, and the Muse is his midwife, coaching Sidney through the process. This moment epitomizes the trope of the pregnant male wit, a moment of “literary parthenogenesis” that many poets, regardless of gender, used to establish authorship.<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare’s Iago mocks such language when he tells Desdemona that his “Muse labors / And thus she is deliver’d” (2.1.127-128).<sup>6</sup> Even women writers take up this common trope. Margaret Cavendish asks that her readers be kind to her book, *Poems and Fancies* (1653), because it is her child, which she began writing “since [she] came into England, being eight Yeares out, and nine Months in” (X3r).<sup>7</sup> Here, Cavendish parallels writing a book to human gestation. These examples from the works of male and female authors reveal a complex relationship between authorship and the female body that represents what I term embodied female authorship. Read one way, Sidney and the others advantageously use the trope of the pregnant woman to establish authorship. Read another way, the female body is what enables their authorship. In the first reading, the female body is a vessel, or a passive

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<sup>4</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, in *The Major Works*, edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008); 1.12

<sup>5</sup> Alison Findlay, *Women in Shakespeare: A Dictionary* (London: Continuum Books, 2010), 292. Katharine Maus, “A Womb of His Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body,” *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, ed. James Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 266-288.

<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *Nature’s Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life* (London, 1656).

object, while in the latter, it is an active force. This dissertation, *Embodied Female Authorship in Early Modern Literature*, emphasizes the latter reading and establishes a narrative of embodied female authorship that centralizes the female body as an authorial agent by re-examining the patriarchal model of masculine authorship.

It is a commonplace of early modern scholarship that early modern literary authorship was gendered masculine. Wendy Wall explains the construction of masculine authorship in her invaluable study, *The Imprint of Gender*. As Wall argues, early modern English print culture shaped authorship as masculine to combat the class stigma that often accompanied print. The aristocracy feared that they could not protect their texts from circulation among the vulgar population because print did not have the same class protection as manuscript cultures.<sup>8</sup> Male printers and writers, then, equated printed texts with female bodies that could be controlled, putting women writers at a particular disadvantage when they sought to publish. Jeffrey Masten, furthermore, writes that “the idea of the author...emerges in conjunction with a language of patriarchal absolutism,” especially during James I’s reign.<sup>9</sup> More recently, Derek Awles’s study proposes that a masculinized authorship hindered men, as well as women. “The anxiousness to ‘prove oneself a man’ must have been especially intense for the young men attempting to

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<sup>8</sup> Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993). Questions of class were also pertinent to many aristocratic women who preferred manuscript over print not because their gender barred them from publication, but because they could control reader access. See, Margaret Ezell, “Women Writers: Patterns of Manuscript Circulation and Publication” in *The Patriarch’s Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family*, (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1987), 62-100; “Do Manuscript Studies Have a Future in Early Modern Women Studies?” *Shakespeare Studies* 32 (2004): 63-65; and Victoria Burke, and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); 73, 64.

fashion authorial ‘careers’ at a time when writing fiction was dismissed as youthful folly,” writes Awles.<sup>10</sup> In all of these studies, the dominant narrative is focused on masculinity. Hence, the question remains: how could women be authors? Or as Wall so aptly asks,

If women were tropes necessary to the process of writing, if they were constructed within genres as figures for male desire, with what authority could they publish? How could a woman become an author if she was the ‘other’ against whom ‘authors’ differentiated themselves?<sup>11</sup>

The answer lies, paradoxically enough, within the patriarchal model of masculine authorship, which constitutes itself through the female body.

*Embodied Female Authorship* re-examines the idea that women’s bodies were “tropes necessary to the process of writing” and reclaims authorial agency within that trope. As with the above examples from Sidney, Shakespeare, and Cavendish, women’s authorial agency is always already present. We just need to tell the story of gendered early modern authorship differently. Instead of letting men be our entry point into inquiries about early modern authorship, what happens if we begin with the female body? My project does just that. The new narrative of embodied female authorship that this project outlines reveals that the patriarchal model of masculine authorship paradoxically endows the female body with authorial agency at the very moment it tries to assert dominance over the female body. Without the metaphorical maternal body and the

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<sup>10</sup> Derek B. Alwes, *Sons and Authors in Elizabethan England* (Newark: University of Delaware P, 2004) 15.

<sup>11</sup> Wall, 282.

Muse's midwife capabilities, Sidney's speaker cannot produce poetry. Iago cannot continue with his satirical poetry. Cavendish needs another time frame as a metaphor for writing. Authorship does not exist without the female body.

The patriarchal model of masculine authorship is a narrative that requires a compulsory repetition to ensure that authorship becomes naturalized as masculine and as an embodied process dependent upon the female body. To stop repeating this cycle is to endanger the existence of masculine authorship. Yet, the repetition does not necessarily ensure stability. Instead, such repetition allows for gaps and fissures, through which new models of authorship emerge. Judith Butler's description of the construction of sex in *Bodies that Matter* provides a useful analogy for thinking about how early modern authorship becomes socially constituted and 'naturalized' as masculine while opening space for emergent models of authorship:

...construction is neither a single act nor a casual process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes places *in* time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration. As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm. This instability is the *deconstituting* possibility in the very process of repetition, the power that undoes the very effects by which 'sex' is stabilized, the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms of 'sex' into a potentially productive crisis.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993, 10.

Butler contends that sex is never fully natural but only seems to be because of the act of compulsory repetition. Yet, this constitutive repetition also destabilizes at the same time, putting sex “into a potentially productive crisis.” Likewise, authorship requires a compulsory repetition that ensures its naturalization as masculine and as an embodied process dependent upon the female body. Constitutive repetition of authorship, however, also paradoxically includes destabilization and throws the “consolidation of the norms of” authorship “into a potentially productive crisis.” The instability of the category of “author” and its inchoate state, as well as the instability of the female body, I argue, make possible the emergence of new models of female authorship in early modern England through the “gaps and fissures” of compulsory repetition. More specifically, the “gaps and fissures” enable multiple, alternate forms of embodied female authorship to emerge in which the female body can positively and productively exist as an agent of female authorship.

The dissertation traces these possible models. In developing the concept of embodied female authorship, I examine how common tropes of the early modern female body--the maternal body, the female martyr, the wife’s corpse, and the female ghost--facilitate authorship through the generation of narratives. Covering a wide generic breadth of texts ranging from the Reformation to the Restoration (1546-1664), my project provides nuanced close-readings of women’s and men’s writing to demonstrate that female authorship does not solely reside in women’s writing but is, in fact, ubiquitous throughout early modern culture. My project requires that we, as scholars, consider the

following: 1) our definitions of authorship; 2) the relationship between female authorship and early modern women's writing; and 3) how the female body can be an active agent.

My dissertation redefines authorship as the act of producing narratives rather than textual products, which allows for a more expansive concept of authorship that emphasizes the predominant early modern understanding of authorship as the act of creation. Scholars have rightfully overturned the model of the singular, individual Romantic author and have historicized early modern authorship as a collaborative, social, and interactive process between writers, printers, and readers.<sup>13</sup> Manuscript miscellanies, for instance, are seen as a source of composite authorship or social authorship.<sup>14</sup> Early modern readers, even, were seen as authors, as they often responded to manuscript texts and then re-circulated them, participating in a social authorship.<sup>15</sup> Thinking of authorial modes other than single authorship enables "us to imagine literature and writing and being as other than they are now."<sup>16</sup> "If the 'critique of authorship' narrative has become

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Foucault's "What is an Author" has been key for widening the scope of authorship by critiquing the cultural authority we place in the Romantic, idealized model of the solitary, creative genius; although, some scholars still insist upon the predominant model of singular authorship. See Jeffrey Knapp, "What is a Co-Author?" *Representations* 89 (2005): 1-29.

<sup>14</sup> Victoria E. Burke, "Manuscript Miscellanies" in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 54-67. For composite authorship see Claudia A. Limbert and John H. O'Neill, "Composite Authorship: Katherine Philips and an Antimarital Satire," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 87 (1993), 487-502; 492. For social authorship see Margaret Ezell *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Dobranski locates the "birth of the author" in early modern print culture, writing that seventeenth-century writers "began to gain new authority" that "grew out of a social process encompassing various forms of co-authorship. Even as writers started to exert more control over and gain new responsibility for their printed texts, they...continued to depend on collaborative practices of writing and publishing" (24). Stephen B. Dobranski, "The Birth of the Author: The Origins of Early Modern Printed Authority," *Authority Matters: Rethinking the Theory and Practice of Authorship*, ed. Stephen Donovan, Danuta Fjellestad, and Rolf Lundén (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), 23-45.

standard,” writes Wall, “it is important to provide new accounts that force scholars to resift and rethink the evidence....to see how different (historically evidenced) notions of authorship illuminate our readings of texts.”<sup>17</sup> Wall encourages scholars to historicize fully the various meanings of authorship in the period. The scholarship outlined above reveals that various models of authorship were available to readers and writers. Yet, these invaluable insights still tether authorship to writing. I think a disservice is done to early modern literary history when we make the act of writing synonymous with authorship because that equation does not consider the numerous ways that the early modern period thought of authorship.

*Embodied Female Authorship in Early Modern Literature* returns us to the most prominent definition of early modern authorship: to create. “Author,” in this project, is a discursive construct rather than a real, historical person. By privileging the verb form of author, “to be the author of an action; to originate, cause, occasion,”<sup>18</sup> rather than its noun form, I shift focus away from the physical production of texts to consider authorship in terms of the generation of narratives--textual, historical, political, and theological. Early modern texts are inundated with the sense of “author” as creator. In Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, Duessa is the “author” of “a many errant knights...wretchednesse.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Wendy Wall, “Early Modern Authorship in 2007.” *Shakespeare Studies* 36 (2008): 60-66; 62. Wall’s article appears in a special volume of *Shakespeare Studies* dedicated to the Shakespearean authorship question and contains invaluable scholarship for authorship studies, in general.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>18</sup> “Author,” 1, *Oxford English Dictionary*. Web.

<sup>19</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, edited by A.C. Hamilton, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harlow, England: Longman, 2001), I.ii.34.7, 9.



John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is chock-full of authors. God declares that Adam and Eve are "authors unto themselves in all / Both what they judge and what they choose," and the Son claims that God is "author of all being."<sup>20</sup> For Eve, Adam is "author and disposer," and Sin heralds Satan as "my father, ...my author."<sup>21</sup> Finally, William Shakespeare's Tarquin threatens Lucrece with pinning the shame of her family onto her if she does not bend to his will, exclaiming to her, "'Thy issue blurred with nameless bastardy, / And thou, the author of their obloquy, / Shalt have thy trespass cited up in rhymes / And sung by children in succeeding times.'"<sup>22</sup> In each of the examples, the use of "author" may slightly differ in context, but each alludes to the function of being a creator. Duessa is the source of any knight's downfall. Milton's God confers the authority of free will onto Adam and Eve while God, Adam, and Satan are all representative of creator figures.

Tarquin's use of "author," however, is the most intriguing. He primarily means that Lucrece will be the originator of her family's shame, but he also associates "author" and "authorship" with writing and a defiled female body. Not only will Lucrece be the source of her children's disgrace, but her perceived sexual transgression and defiled body also will become a story, written down for all future generations to read. Curiously, Tarquin simultaneously casts Lucrece as author and text--both agent and object--and pejoratively uses her body to construct her as such. Here is a doubly gendered construction of authorship: Tarquin is a male author who creates the defiled body of

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<sup>20</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harlow, England: Longman, 1998), 3.122-123; 3.374.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.635; 2.864.

<sup>22</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 522-24.

Lucrece, and Lucrece's defiled body makes Lucrece a female author of her family's shame. For both constructions of female and male author, the female body is the site upon which authorship is grounded. In this configuration of embodied female authorship, the female body is an agent and producer of authorship and not merely an object or product of authorship. Numerous sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts, such as *The Rape of Lucrece*, portray the female body as a source of authorial creation. While such depictions may not be the most flattering or even ones that feminist scholars would want to claim, they are still examples of embodied female authorship. More importantly, whether positive or negative, models of embodied female authorship with their emphasis on creation allow for a more inclusive early modern authorship that bestows agency upon those subjects who most seem to lack such authority, such as Lucrece and those traced throughout this project. Each chapter outlines a particular type of embodied female authorship and the various narratives that result from it. Chapter 2 uses the well-worn metaphor of the pregnant male wit who labors to birth literary creations to re-read representations of the maternal body as producers of theological narratives in midwife manuals, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing*. Subsequent chapters reveal how the female martyr grounds religio-political narratives of the Protestant Reformation in England; how the wife's corpse offers narratives of chastity to correct those ones of sexual infidelity; and how the female ghost in Lucy Hutchinson's *Memoirs of Colonel John Hutchinson* yields a providential, republican narrative in the face of the Restoration. Restoring "author" as a verb rather than a noun emphasizes

action, agency, and creation, and historicizes female authorship as integral to gender, political, and religious hierarchies.

My decision to use the phrase “female author” over “woman writer” reflects my commitment to a more inclusive early modern authorship. My concept of embodied female authorship is not confined to the category of woman writer or to the production of literary texts by women writers. For me, the term ‘female author’ is much more expansive than ‘woman writer’ because it envisions ways of cultivating authorship that are separate from *and* in addition to the physical production of written texts. Ilona Bell and Susan Frye have already begun to rethink authorship in transformative ways. Bell suggests that women are authorial agents when they critique lyric poetry addressed to them, a point I take up in Chapter 3’s discussion of Desdemona.<sup>23</sup> Frye claims other material productions, like needlework, as a form of women’s authorship.<sup>24</sup> The term “female author” also opens space to think about how male-written texts can develop models of female authorship, something I explore in each of my chapters. Early modern texts themselves illustrate that female authorship is not solely connected to women’s writing. Take, for example, Sir Walter Raleigh’s “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd,” the famous response to Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” or the popular female persona poems by Thomas Campion, John Donne, and Ben

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<sup>23</sup> Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); and “Private Lyrics in Elizabeth Cary’s *Tragedy of Mariam*,” *The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680*, Ed. Heather Wolfe, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 17-34.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England*, (Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 2010).

Jonson.<sup>25</sup> These canonical male poets speak from a woman's point of view, and while their poems are not without faults, they prove that female authorship is not limited to women's writing.

One of my main goals with this project is to demonstrate just how much female authorship matters for early modern literary history, beyond early modern women's writing. Therefore, I integrate extensive readings of Shakespeare's and Milton's representations of embodied female authorship along with those of Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Cary, and Lucy Hutchinson. Each chapter pairs man and woman: Milton and Leigh; John Bale and Anne Askew; Cary and Shakespeare; and Lucy and John Hutchinson. Placing these writers side-by-side reflects my attempt to avoid essentializing authorship as male or female, according to the writer's gender. Put another way, I assume neither that male writers only participate in constructing male authorship nor that women writers only participate in constructing female authorship. Just as important, I do not presume that male writers negatively depict female authorship or that women writers paint it with a more positive brush. In my project, embodied female authorship is not subversive of or antagonistic to male authorship because, as gender goes, there is no innate male or female authorship. Both are early modern constructs that emerge *alongside* one another.

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<sup>25</sup> On female persona poems see Gail Reitenbach, "'Maydes Are Simple, Some Men Say': Thomas Campion's Female Persona Poems," *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*. Ed. Betty Travitsky (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990), 80-95; and Pamela Coren, "In the Person of Womankind: Female Persona Poems by Campion, Donne, Jonson," *Studies in Philology* 98.2 (2001): 225-50. Coren also explores the male-constructed female voice in the genre of English ayres (lute songs), which are written by men and meant for men to perform See Coren, "Singing and Silence: Female Persona in the English Ayre," *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 16.4 (2002): 525-47.

For far too long, early modern scholars have pitted men and women against one another. The field of early modern women's writing has traditionally privileged women writers who speak out against patriarchal constrictions of women's authorship, like Cavendish and Aphra Behn, or those women who ostensibly transgress male-dominated genres, such as Mary Wroth. While privileging oppositional voices has done much to establish and mobilize the field of early modern women's writing, such an antagonistic methodology cannot healthily sustain it, given that more and more scholarship uncovers undeniable links between early modern women writers and their male contemporaries: Anne Vaughan Lock, Mary Sidney, and even Cavendish. In *Writing Women's Literary History*, Margaret Ezell cautions scholars against elevating some early modern women writers over others just because some, like Margaret Cavendish or Amelia Lanyer, fit our twenty-first century, feminist standards, while others, like Mary Sidney, perhaps do not. Ezell writes, "We worry whether our literary forebears were 'good' feminists," and "while we lament the scarcity of women writers from earlier periods, there is a tendency to devalue or even to 'reinvent' those who do not conform to our criteria of 'good' feminists."<sup>26</sup> As we have sought to create a women's literary history, we have shaped it to our own desires, erasing those who we do not want to claim, but as Ezell reminds us, "the danger in searching out one's relatives...is whom one might find."<sup>27</sup> Put another way, scholarship should reflect a diverse array of women writers and not just those that seem transgressive. Following Ezell's advice, I do not shy away from women writers

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<sup>26</sup>Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993). 27, 28.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 20.

who embrace patriarchal ideologies; doing so would be a false historicism. Chapter 5, for example, takes up the notoriously patriarchal Lucy Hutchinson who develops a model of embodied female authorship rooted within patriarchy.

Let me be clear: I am not denying the immeasurable value of the field of early modern women's writing. In the past two decades, the field has developed a more expansive paradigm for literature that accepts genres like recipe books, commonplace books, and mother's advice manuals (a focus of Chapter 2), which were commonly written by women, and other 'feminine' genres that were associated with women, like romance.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, I strongly believe that the larger field of English Renaissance studies desperately needs the field of early modern women's writing precisely because English Renaissance studies still neglects the important ways that women's writing shaped early modern literature and culture. One only need look at how studies on early modern authorship often fail to integrate women fully into their discussions, at all levels--conferences, monographs, and even articles. The program for the 2015 *MLA* Conference in Vancouver, Canada, for instance, listed over forty panels on Renaissance British literature, but only four papers focused on women writers.<sup>29</sup> More pertinent to the project at hand is that one of the panels specifically explored representations of early modern

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<sup>28</sup> Michelle Dowd and Julie Eckerle, *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England* (Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Lara Dodds, "In Defense of Bad Writing: Early Modern Women's Literary History and a New Formalism," Panel, "The Future of the Seventeenth Century," *MLA*, Vancouver, Canada. 10 Jan. 2015. "I think that early modern women's writing remains marginalized in spite of the fact that we are now supposed to be post-canonical. If we take the MLA Convention program as one measure of the present of the Seventeenth Century, this seems to be the case. Of the 40 panels categorized as British lit, Renaissance or Seventeenth Century, 3 papers (plus my own), or somewhere between two and a half and 3 and a half percent, are about women writers. [when I expanded my search to include Comp. lit and other language traditions I found a few more, including a single paper each on *The Blazing World* and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, but I don't think the percentage would change much]" (2).

poetic authorship yet contained no mention of gender. Such large neglect is also visible in publication trends. Stephen Dobranski's *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (2005) and Richard Dutton's *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England* (2000) both focus extensively on male writers: Sidney, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, Herrick, and Milton. Derek Alwes's *Sons and Authors in Elizabethan England* (2004) traces the filial tension between sons and fathers in male-authored works.<sup>30</sup> Then there is on a smaller scale, but no less alarming, an article by Robert C. Evans comparing Anne Vaughan Lock's and John Donne's sonnets, which nicely brings these two poets together and gives attentive, close-readings to Lock's poetry. Lock, while a lesser known early modern woman writer, was the first English poet to publish a sonnet sequence. Reading Lock and Donne in conversation with one another "help[s] highlight the traditions to which both poets belong, while their differences help accentuate the unique ways in which each poet helped shape and contribute to those traditions."<sup>31</sup> Evans rightly situates Lock in a broader literary tradition and credits her influences on the sonnet tradition. Yet, Evans concludes with a jab at Lock's aesthetics:

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<sup>30</sup> Even in her monograph *Showing Like a Queen: Female Authority and Literary Experiment in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), which explores how male writers fashion new literary modes in response to the female monarch Elizabeth, Katherine Eggert rather disappointingly negates women writers, claiming that "women writers of this period would tend not to fit the bill" for "literary innovation" (11). Although, Laura Knoppers catalogues women writers such as Mary Sidney, Isabella Whitney, Margaret Tyler, Anne Dowriche, and Alice Egerton as writers during the reign of Elizabeth, the latter of which composed "an entertainment for Queen Elizabeth's visit to Harefield," during the reign of Elizabeth (xv). Knoppers, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). Mary Sidney, in particular, demonstrates significant formal experiment in response to Elizabeth's reign with her and Sidney's collaborative Psalter, which includes a poem, "Even now that Care," that presents the Psalter to Elizabeth as a gift.

<sup>31</sup> Robert C. Evans, "'Despaire Behind, and Death Before': Comparing and Contrasting the 'Meditative' Sonnets of Anne Vaughan Lock and John Donne," *Ben Jonson Journal* 16.1-2 (2009): 99-116; 112.

If Donne finally seems the more adventurous, inventive, and talented writer of the two, that is only to be expected: few other poets in the whole history of English literature can equal Donne in wit, creativity, rhetorical fecundity, and metaphorical range. The remarkable thing about Lock, however, is *how well she stands up to a comparison with Donne* and how often she seems to *anticipate his general skill and specific effects*, even though she was writing more than half a century earlier than he. To read Lock's poems is to be reminded again and again of Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, and the fact that her works bear up so well when compared to his is perhaps one of the highest compliments one could pay her. Lock's works emerge from such a reading not only as some of the most intriguing sonnets produced in sixteenth-century England but also as clear precursors of some of the greatest religious sonnets ever penned.<sup>32</sup> (emphasis added)

In this summary, Lock's sole literary purpose is to remind us of Donne. His sonnets are the glorious archetype to which Lock's sonnets are the precursor. Lock's aesthetics do not stand on their own for their daring and innovative use of the sonnet but only reveal how well she can write when compared to Donne. The problem, here, lies within a need to place early modern writers in competition with one another, to deflate one's individual aesthetic at the price of inflating another's, and all too often, women writers get short changed on the literary market.

The above examples illuminate the necessity of a field of scholars devoted to early modern women's writing, in which I would include myself. Although, I believe the above examples also demonstrate why scholars of early modern women's writing can no longer afford to isolate women's writing. Instead of ghettoizing women's writing, we should contextualize it because as Lara Dodds suggests, to "maintain the status quo of early modern women's writing as a separate field of study with its own conferences, anthologies, and courses, is to do a disservice not only to women writers, but also to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



Renaissance studies more broadly.”<sup>33</sup> This isolation and separation is not only a “disservice” but also a false construction of literary relationships between early modern women and men and creates a sense of the “lost” woman writer who was never present in early modern culture.<sup>34</sup> For every cultural prohibition against women’s writing, such as Lord Denny’s inflammatory couplet to Lady Mary Wroth to “Work o th’Workes leave idle bookes alone / For wise and worthy women have written none,”<sup>35</sup> there is a cultural promotion of writing women, such as Ben Jonson’s, “A Sonnet to the Noble Lady, The Lady Mary Wroth,” which praises Wroth as a better lover than Venus herself and whose sonnets have made Jonson “a better lover, and much better poet” as he copies them out.<sup>36</sup> We must not forget that most patriarchal proscriptions against women’s writing are contextual; Denny’s couplet against Wroth has more to do with her scathing depiction of him in *Urania*. When we work to historicize women’s writing, placing it in the material literary world of early modern England, we see that women writers were not “strange monsters” of the Renaissance.<sup>37</sup> Early modern English authorship was much more inclusive than scholars of women’s writing often give it credit for being. It is these

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<sup>33</sup> Dodds, *The Literary Invention of Margaret Cavendish* (Pittsburg, Duquesne Press, 2013), 6. Marueen Quilligan, “Completing the Conversation,” *Shakespeare Studies* 25 (1997): 42-49; Shannon Miller, *Engendering the Fall: John Milton and Seventeenth-Century Women Writers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); and Michelle M. Dowd, *Women’s Work in Early English Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Lord Denny, “To Pamphilia from the father-in-law of Seralius,” *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983); page 32-33; lines 25-26.

<sup>36</sup> Jonson, “A Sonnet to the Noble Lady, the Lady Mary Wroth,” in *Seventeenth-Century British Poetry 1603-1660*, ed. by John P. Rumrich and Gregory Chaplin (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), line 4.

<sup>37</sup> May Sarton, “My Sisters, O My Sisters,” *The Kenyon Review* 8.2 (1946): 262-265.

interactions of inclusivity that we need in order to paint a fuller picture of early modern literature. Chapters 3 and 5 highlight the collaboration between men and women--John Bale and Anne Askew's efforts to establish a Protestant England and Lucy and John Hutchinson's attempts at building an ideal republic--and the models of embodied female authorship, which result from such collaboration.

My project, furthermore, participates in a methodology of feminist formalism. I perform extensive close-readings of women's writing (as well as men's writing); quote generously from women's lesser known text; and pay particular attention to women's literary techniques and formal innovation, which until recently, has been largely ignored. In the words of Alice Eardley, "Motivated by an interest in what poetry can tell us about women, not what women can tell us about poetry, critics treat literary texts by women as historical documents" (270).<sup>38</sup> Analyzing and quoting women's works raises awareness of women's writing and, more importantly, treats it as equal to men's writing. The traditional early modern canon has been solidified precisely through repetition of which poets get incorporated and whose work appears most often in print. A focus on close-readings productively moves the field of early modern women's writing beyond the fetishization of the woman writer--the fixation on the historical figure rather than the writing, a point to which I will return to in this project's conclusion. Chapter 2 follows

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<sup>38</sup> Alice Eardley, "Recreating the Canon: Women Writers and Anthologies of Early Modern Verse," *Women's Writing* 14. 2 (2007): 270-289; 270. See also Nigel Smith, "The Rod and the Canon," *Women's Writing* 14.2 (2007): 232-245; Sasha Roberts, "Women's Literary Capital in Early Modern England: Formal Composition and Rhetorical Display in Manuscript and Print," *Women's Writing* 14.2 (2007): 246-269; "Feminist Criticism and the New Formalism: Early Modern Women and Literary Engagement," *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry and Culture 1640-1680* (Oxford UP, 2013).

the trope of reproductive labor throughout Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing*; Chapter 4 attends to the poetic qualities of Elizabeth Cary's Senecan tragedy, *The Tragedy of Mariam* and how Cary's use of soliloquy, enjambment, and rhyming couplets reveals a unifying instability that fosters the embodied female authorship of Mariam's corpse; finally, Chapter 5 quotes extensively from Lucy Hutchinson's impressive oeuvre in order to draw out a model of female authorship productively rooted in God-ordained patriarchy.

Finally, a field like the history of the book provides useful tools for considering the embodied process of early modern authorship. Sarah C.E. Ross, for example, explains that as early modern women's writing "mov[es] away from simple conceptions of the female author as the originator and agent of textual production," we begin to see "the more complex consideration of the nexuses of textual, social, and material forces through which articulations of gender--and authorship itself--are produced and reproduced."<sup>39</sup> Helen Smith extends the concept of female authorship in her discussion of women's role in the materiality of books and authorship, "insisting that women [in their roles as authors] are more present than has been assumed even in books securely attributed to male authors."<sup>40</sup> Smith examines the connections between women, the body and the material book, writing that women "are constituted by material and social praxis even as they bring that practice into being, but they are also bodies whose recovered traces matter

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<sup>39</sup> Sarah C.E. Ross, "Early Modern Women and the Apparatus of Authorship," *Parergon* 29.2 (2012), 1-8; 2.

<sup>40</sup> Helen Smith, *'Grossly Material Things' Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford UP, 2012), 9.

because they allow us to tell a different story about the past.”<sup>41</sup> What is intriguing about Ross and Smith is their shared interest in the material aspect of female authorship. Also, Smith’s notion that women’s bodies are important because “they allow us to tell a different story about the past” is helpful for my discussion of female authorship. For what I am claiming is that a reconsideration of the material female body as an agent of authorship reveals a different story about constructions of early modern authorship.

Returning to the early modern concept of an author as a creator is imperative for understanding the female body as productive of, rather than a hindrance to, female authorship. The traditional argument that in early modern authorship men became authors while women remained passive texts has done much to suggest that the female body is completely passive in the creative process. This argument presumes a unilateral influence in which men inscribe their authority upon women’s bodies. A violent example of male authorial inscription onto the female body is found in Ben Jonson’s comedy, *Volpone*, where the villainous husband Corvino, worried that his wife Celia will commit adultery, threatens to carve the word “whore” into her body: “and at my window hang you forth-- devising / Some monstrous crime, which I, in capital letters, / Will eat into thy flesh... / and burning corrosives, on this stubborn breast.”<sup>42</sup> Corvino’s husbandly authority depends upon Celia’s chaste body.

The example of Corvino and Celia, however, exemplifies that the female body exerts agency, as well. While Corvino threatens to create a narrative of infidelity and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 16

<sup>42</sup> Jonson, *Volpone* in *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, ed. by Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 3.7.103-106.

whoredom upon Celia, her body threatens to create a narrative of cuckoldry, with Corvino in the starring role. In many other texts, the female body is seen as a site of dangerous authority that could yield various narratives. As seen in Chapter 4's discussion of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, when Mariam sheds tears over Herod's death, her tears register as conflicting emotions. Her mother believes Mariam weeps over a man who has killed her family while her sister-in-law believes Mariam sheds tears of joy for the death of her husband. Mariam's body is an object of instability; her body, however, also produces different narratives. Thus, instead of viewing female bodies as objects to be read, this project shifts the paradigm to read female bodies as authorial *agents* of narratives.

Understanding the female body as an agent of authorship instead of an object of authorship coincides with recent scholarship on the early modern body that finds subjectivity constructed through the body, a re-reading of the post-Enlightenment theory that places the mind over the body.<sup>43</sup> Jennifer Waldron, for instance, argues for the primacy of the body in the early modern Protestant self despite previous scholarship that emphasizes an "antimaterialistic or exclusively word-based...Protestant aesthetic."<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Jennifer Feather critiques modern constructions of the self and "the emergence of humanist subjectivity [that] relies on objectifying the body and positing an

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<sup>43</sup> As Judith Butler notes, "the ontological distinction between soul (consciousness, mind) and body invariably supports relations of political and psychic subordination and hierarchy. The mind not only subjugates the body, but occasionally entertains the fantasy of fleeing its embodiment altogether," so "any uncritical reproduction of the mind/body distinction ought to be rethought for the implicit gender hierarchy that the distinction has conventionally produced, maintained, and rationalized." *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 17.

<sup>44</sup> Jennifer Waldron, *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice, and Early Modern Theater*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 23.

autonomous will that is the source of selfhood.”<sup>45</sup> Feather claims that combat can constitute the self, giving much attention to the role of the body in combat. Focusing on “bodily acts of prowess,” Feather proposes that early modern texts base the self upon “depictions of bloody and damaged bodies.”<sup>46</sup> Although Feather’s main emphasis is on the constitutive role of combat, she also stresses the figure of the active body. The bodies of Waldron’s and Feather’s studies may not necessarily be the bodies that we desire, want to claim as integral to the self, or wish to acknowledge as part of the body’s history. However, as I argue in the chapters that follow, we cannot ignore such representations because they also matter for constructions of authorship. Waldron and Feather reveal stories about the early modern period (and ourselves) that are in need of telling. Particularly what needs to be told is that the early modern body was not a passive object but an agent of change that figured greatly in the development of authorship.

In order to emphasize embodied female authorship, my chapters are organized by the life cycle of the human body, birth, life, death, and afterlife, and focus on particular narratives brought forth by these female bodies. The first chapter places the maternal body at the center of patriarchal authorship. Using a typological framework of Eve and Mary, two maternal archetypes for the early modern period, I argue that embodied female authorship begins in Eden and is restored through Mary’s birth of Christ. The maternal body is the first model of embodied female authorship explored by the project. Looking at midwife manuals, John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and Dorothy Leigh’s *The Mothers*

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<sup>45</sup> Jennifer Feather, *Writing Combat and the Self in Early Modern English Literature: The Pen and the Sword*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 167.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 81, and 19.

*Blessing*, this chapter argues that the Creation and Fall narratives of Genesis establish a patriarchal model of authorship by depicting male as creator and the female body as created; moreover, these initial Genesis stories figure the maternal body as usurping patriarchal authority. However, the recapitulative narrative of the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception and subsequent birth of Christ sanctifies female authorship through the maternal body. Eve and Mary, then, offer two crucial, although rivaling, models of embodied female authorship. Eve generates a fallen authorship when she disobeys God's command and listens to the serpentine Satan; Eve's transgressive actions result in tales of the maternal body as deceptive and capable of producing monsters. Mary, however, presents women with a redemptive authorship when she gives birth to Christ, the Word incarnate. Eve and Mary and their respective narratives not only color early modern gender politics, as scholars often note, but are also central to figurations of female authorship.

Chapter 2 continues an investigation of embodied female authorship within religious narratives and centers on a specific religio-political narrative of the English Protestant Reformation. In 1546 and 1547, John Bale's editions of *The Examinations of Anne Askew* made Askew's female martyred body a living monument to the English Reformation. Askew, put on trial, examined, tortured, and executed by Henry VIII and his counselors, reportedly wrote down her examinations and entrusted them to Bale to publish. Most scholars read the relationship between Askew and Bale as a combative one in which Bale distorts Askew's body and her text for his own purposes; Askew remains voiceless. I seek a new understanding of the Bale-Askew relationship that lessens the

tension between the two figures. Instead of seeing them as combatants, I see Bale and Askew working in tandem to develop a model of authorship through the martyred female body. Applying the rhetoric of Christ's body and his members, I argue for a co-dependent authorship in which Bale authors Askew as a new Protestant virgin martyr and Askew authors the commentary that Bale provides. Neither Bale nor Askew can produce the *Examinations* without the other. Bale, furthermore, makes the female martyr essential to rewriting England religious history. Askew's embodied martyrdom (signified by the woodcut frontispiece on the first edition of *Examinations*, which depicts Askew with Bible and pen in hand, trampling the popish serpent underfoot) revises Catholic tales of virgin martyrs (primarily St. Margaret) and produces a new narrative in which Protestantism reigns.

Moving from the authorial agency of Askew's martyred body, I consider another unlikely source of female authorship: the wife's corpse. Providing close-readings on Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* and William Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*, I propose that the corpses of Mariam, Desdemona, and Hermione are far from lifeless; they spark new narratives within their respective plays. I select these three plays because each play's dominant narrative relies upon the patriarchal model of authorship, which seeks to control the wife's body as a means of masculine authority but simultaneously endows it with authorial agency. In each play, the husbands build their authority upon the wife's chaste body, so when the body ceases to be chaste, it threatens husbandly authority. After condemning their wives as adulteresses, Herod, Othello, and Leontes respectively read the wife's external, bodily actions as a manifestation of their



infidelity: Mariam's funeral garb; Desdemona's handkerchief, and Hermione's two children, Mamilius and Perdita. In an attempt to create a narrative ending of poetic justice, the husbands punish their wives by stabilizing the unchaste body, permanently fixing it so it can no longer threaten patriarchal authority. They kill their wives (although Hermione dies indirectly). Whereas the wife's corpse should put a period at the end of the play's story, the corpse resists fixity. The corpses give narrative life. My readings of these well-known dramas show that in women's most vulnerable moments, the female corpse becomes a powerful agent of narrative change.

The final chapter locates embodied female authorship in the female ghost. Concluding her *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, Lucy Hutchinson claims that her apparition haunts the prison chambers of her dead husband, John Hutchinson. Through this intriguing declaration, Hutchinson, I argue, establishes a model of ghostly authorship that enables her to create a providential, republican narrative that opposes the Restoration and its political marginalization of defeated republicans. Much negative criticism surrounds Hutchinson's assertion to be her husband's shadow, but I reposition Hutchinson's "shadow" as a ghostly author that facilitates authorship rather than precludes it. The model of authorship is built upon the paradigm of God as the supreme author (which returns us to Chapter 2), who orders men's lives through Providence. The paradigm requires human and particularly female subordination at the same time it allows Hutchinson to re-author her husband's life. Lucy Hutchinson represents an amalgamation of the three different models of embodied female authorship traced throughout my project: a mother and wife who recreates her husband as a national hero for her children

and fellow countrymen and a self-made corpse whose ghost guides the narrative. The authorial female ghost in Hutchinson's narrative draws attention to the distinctive role of the female *author*, versus the woman writer. Hutchinson's ghost suggests that what is most valuable about authorship is not the writer but the creative powers in the act of authoring, an insight that can help to reshape the field of early modern women's writing and authorship studies.

## CHAPTER II

### REDEEMING WORDS: EVE, MARY, AND MATERNAL AUTHORSHIP

Eve and Mary the mother are our stem;  
All our centuries go back to them.  
.....  
For it is surely a lifetime work,  
This learning to be a woman.  
Until at the end what is clear  
Is the marvelous skill to make  
Life grow in all its forms.  
---May Sarton, "My Sisters, O My Sisters"<sup>47</sup>

Early modern authorship required giving birth. Poets saw themselves as mother-poets, who conceived poetry in the womb of their imaginations. After giving birth, mother-poets entrusted their book-children into the hands of unknown readers, apologizing for any deformity or asking strangers to protect their children. Robert Herrick swears that his child-poems are legitimately his ("Upon His Verses") while Margaret Cavendish apologizes for making "so much ado" over her book of poetry, which she compares to a fledgling, as it enters the dangerous world ("An Apology for Writing So Much upon This Book").

Sir Philip Sidney best epitomizes the mother-poet. He frequently invokes the pregnancy trope to describe the creation of poetry. As discussed in the Introduction, Sidney's opening sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) depicts writer's block as an

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<sup>47</sup> May Sarton, "My Sisters, O My Sisters," *The Kenyon Review* 8.2 (1946): 262-265.

intense laboring process akin to giving birth. Sidney employs a similar metaphor when he presents his prose romance, *Arcadia*, to his sister, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke. Sidney speaks from the perspective of an embarrassed mother, who contains the possibility of birthing monstrosity. He writes that so “many many fancies” are in the text that “if it had not ben in some way delivuered, would haue growen a monster” (A4r). Finally, in *Defense of Poesy* (1595), Sidney writes, “the skill of each artificer standeth in that *idea* or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. And that the poet hath that *idea* is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he had imagined them” (216).<sup>48</sup> In each of the above examples, the poet is mother, conceiving and “delivering” poetry. The maternal body is at the center of authorship and provides my first example of embodied female authorship.

Despite the overabundance of pregnancy discourse in his texts, Sidney offers a competing model of authorship that is inherently patriarchal and masculine. In *Defense of Poesy*, Sidney attributes the poet’s creative talents to God, the original poet:

Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man’s wit with the efficacy of nature; but rather give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings--with no small arguments to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it (217).

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<sup>48</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy*, in *Sir Philip Sidney, The Major Work*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 212-250.

Sidney invites us back into Eden, a space of poetic perfection crafted by the Word of God. In Sidney's argument, God endows man with an "erected wit" that enables man to mimic the creative nature of God. "[M]ade to His own likeness," man also creates through poetry. Eden is the genesis of authorship. Yet Sidney elides a crucial person in his version of Eden: Eve. In doing so, Sidney implies that authorship originates as male property.

Patriarchal renderings of the Creation story that dismiss Eve carry significant weight for our understanding of authorship given that Eve's maternal body becomes the source of human creation. Eve and the maternal body complicate the narrative of patriarchal authorship so popular in the early modern period, for while Sidney can imagine a model of poetic, Edenic authorship in which the male poet simply "bringeth things forth," the language of creation itself is fraught by the maternal body. To "bring forth" is to give birth. One answer to the undeniable fact that the maternal body lies at the core of authorship has been to naturalize authorship as male privilege. The imagination and poetic creative faculties become the domain of men, and the maternal body serves as the conduit through which poets "bringeth things forth." Still, though, authorship requires the maternal body.

May Sarton's poem "My Sisters, O My Sisters" (1946), an excerpt of which serves as this chapter's epigraph, provides a revisionist tale of authorship to that of Sidney's. Sarton traces authorship back to Eve and Mary, poet mothers who demonstrate that woman's true gift is her ability to author: "the marvelous skill to make / Life grow in all its forms." "My Sisters, O My Sisters" is a call to women poets to stop thinking of

themselves as “strange monsters” and embrace their maternal bodies, which naturally make them poets. Women’s bodies create nature--babies and poetry. The maternal body authors.

Readers need not to look at twentieth-century feminist poetry to find different narratives of authorship, though. This chapter reveals numerous early modern narratives of maternal authorship. From midwife manuals to John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* to Dorothy Leigh’s *The Mother’s Blessing*, these selected early modern texts repeat stories of the maternal body’s creative power. In the midwife manuals, maternal authorship is something to be feared since it can lead to deformity and monstrosity. These texts simultaneously reinforce a patriarchal authorship while producing a discourse of female authorship. *Paradise Lost* and *The Mother’s Blessing* offer more focused examples of maternal authorship in the figures of Eve and Mary. Returning to Eve and Mary and their respective Fall and Redemption narratives is crucial to recovering a model of embodied female authorship located in the maternal body. The Fall not only establishes early modern gender politics but also colors early modern authorship. When Eve transgresses God’s authority by listening to the serpent’s erroneous words, she leads humanity into sin. Her actions also result in women’s fallen relationship with words, which posits women as inherently unchaste, and as I contend, unfit as authors. Milton, I argue later, reinforces the myth of Eve’s destructive authorship, while Leigh considers the potential for women as authors of human salvation. Leigh writes, “Here is the great and woeful

shame taken from women by God, working in a woman; man can claim no part in it.”<sup>49</sup>

The redemption narrative foreshadows the Immaculate Conception in which Mary births Christ, the Word Incarnate. Whereas Eve rejects God’s word and receives the curse of womankind, Mary accepts and hosts God’s Word, earning her the epithet of Mary, the blessed Virgin. Mary offers women a chaste relationship with words and redeems female authorship. The texts I have chosen for this chapter collectively endow the maternal body with authorial agency, regardless if the narrative is one of monstrosity or salvation.

### **Poetic Monstrosity: Midwife Tales of Maternal Authorship**

Early modern midwife manuals offer a fruitful avenue for discussing the female body as an agent of authorship. Midwife manuals first appeared in England with the publication of *The Birth of Mankind*, in 1540, marking the emergence of a new genre that became popular throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>50</sup> Written primarily by men, midwife manuals were often translations of continental texts; based upon classical authorities, such as Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates; and frequently borrowed liberally and without acknowledgement from other midwife manuals.<sup>51</sup> Each manual shared the same purpose:

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<sup>49</sup> Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother’s Blessing*, 1616, 28. All citations come from Sylvia Brown’s edited collection, *Women’s Writing in Stuart England*, ed. Sylvia Brown (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1999). 1-87.

<sup>50</sup> *The Birth of Mankind* was first translated into English by Richard Jonas in 1540, popularized by Thomas Raynalde’s 1545 edition, and frequently reprinted until 1645. For bibliographic history of this first English midwife manual, see Elaine Hobby’s scholarly edition, which is based on the 1560 edition by Thomas Raynalde. Elaine Hobby, ed. *The Birth of Mandkind* (Ashgate, 2009). Other seventeenth-century midwife manuals include Jacques Guillemaeau’s *Child-birth or, The Happy Deliverie of Women* (1612), Jacob Rueff’s *The Expert Midwife* (1637), Nicholas Culpeper’s *Directory for Midwives* (1651), Thomas Chamberlayne’s *The Compleat Midwives Practice Enlarged* (1656), Laevinus Lemnius’s *Secret Miracles of Nature in Four Books* (1658), and *A Discourse touching Generation* (1664); James Wolveridge’s *Speculum Matricis Hybernicum* (1670), William Sermon’s *The Ladies Companion* (1671), and Jane Sharpe’s *The Midwives Book or The Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (1671).

<sup>51</sup> The only woman to write a midwife manual was Jane Sharpe, whose manual heavily borrowed and revised Culpeper’s manual.

the bodily and mental governance of pregnant women from their initial conception to postnatal care. The manuals also help uphold a patriarchal model of authorship in which men are the true authorities and authors of women's bodies. These midwife manuals do more than govern women's bodies and provide insight into early modern medical practices and theories;<sup>52</sup> they also, I propose, tell powerful stories about female authorship and the dangers of the maternal imagination. The maternal imagination may distort, but at its core, it creates.

Writers of midwife manuals believed that the pregnant woman's imagination could physically alter her child's appearance, often to monstrous ends. An extremely hairy child, a child with a cleft-lip, and a headless child were all products of a mother's fanciful mind. While scholarship often repeats this early modern commonplace of the deforming maternal imagination, literary scholars have not fully considered the implications for authorship found within this representation of the female body.<sup>53</sup> The act of writing, translating, and publishing so many midwife manuals in early modern England not only repeats cautionary tales of the maternal imagination and body, but the repetition of such tales produces a discourse of female authorship. Maternal bodies are always something to be guarded precisely because of the authority they possess over

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<sup>52</sup> Important studies on midwife manuals include Caroline Bicks, *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004); Monica H. Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Pre-Modern Gynaecology* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008); and Valerie Worth-Sylianou, *Pregnancy and Birth in Early Modern France: Treatises by Caring Physicians and Surgeons (1581-1625)* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> See for instance, Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (John Hopkins UP, 2005).



pregnancy, and if not properly supervised, there are grotesque consequences. Tales of monstrous births are, in fact, narratives of women's authorial agency.

Midwife manuals' theories on pregnancy are often built upon classical theories of a gendered mind-body relationship in which men actively participate in conception and women are the passive bodily vessel through which conception happens. In *On the Generation of Animals*, Aristotle postulates that in conception, men contribute the form (or the soul) while women provide the matter, or the body:

[t]he female always provides the material, the male provides that which fashions the material into shape; this, in our view, is the specific characteristic of each of the sexes: that is what it means to be male or to be female.... Thus the physical part, the body, comes from the female, and the Soul from the male...<sup>54</sup>

The primary difference between men's and women's roles in conception exists in the gendered depictions of activity: the man's form acts upon and shapes the passive matter, or feminized body.<sup>55</sup> Thomas Laqueur writes of the above passage that "To Aristotle being male *meant* the capacity to supply the sensitive soul.... Without the sensitive soul the body was no better than a corpse or part of a corpse (GA 2.5.741a8-16). The dead is made quick by the spark, by the incorporeal *sperma* (seed), of the genitor."<sup>56</sup> Life resides in being male. Creation is man's privilege. Women's bodies are merely vessels, lifeless

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<sup>54</sup> Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, translator A. L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1943), 2.4.738b20-23.

<sup>55</sup> In modern biological terms, pre- and early-modern conception was thought to be the process between active sperm and passive eggs, a patriarchal understanding of conception, which still continues in modern biology. See Emily Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles," *Signs* 16.3 (1991): 485-501.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990), 30.

things that need a man's "spark" in order to create a child. While Laqueur takes Aristotle's and other classical philosophers' theories as evidence for a one-sex model in the Renaissance, I am more interested in thinking about how Aristotle's conception hypothesis creates a one-sex authorship.<sup>57</sup> In other words, Aristotle helps produce a patriarchal authorship that was to become naturalized in the early modern period, echoed throughout early modern midwife manuals. Authorship follows nature and natural pregnancies.

Midwife books reinforce a "naturalized" patriarchal model of authorship in two ways: one, the male writer authors a feminized text and two, the male writer assumes sole ownership of creation, using the female body as his in order to lay claim to authorship. In midwife manuals, the male writers' task is to interpret the female body, specifically how women succeed or fail to produce new bodies or endanger them. The genre allows male writers to claim full knowledge about the privacies of the female body (even though male midwives were rare), and distribute them to others. The translator of Jacques Guillemeau's *Child-birth, or the Happy Delivery of Women* (1612) worries that he might be considered "offensive to Women, in prostituting and divulging that, which they would not haue come to open light, and which beside cannot be exprest in such modest termes, as are fit for the virginitie of pen & paper, and the white sheetes of their Child-bed" ("The Translators Preface").<sup>58</sup> Direct sexual language abounds as the translator parallels writing to the act of prostitution. Discussing women's secrets is the same as spreading women's

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<sup>57</sup> Of course there are objections to Laqueur's theory; see most recently, Helen King, *"One-Sex Body on Trial: The Early and Modern Evidence"* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>58</sup> Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-birth or, the Happy Delivery of Women*, 1612.

legs (both during sex and childbirth). The “virgin” sheet of paper alludes to the virginal bed sheets, which men hope will result in a pure pregnancy and childbirth. Midwife manuals promote a masculine model of authorship in which the male writer is dependent upon the maternal body for establishing authority.

In assuming knowledge of the female body, writers of midwife manuals then used the female body in order to discuss their authorship. Found in many manuals is the paralleling of the author’s mental labor of translation with that of a mother’s child labor just as male poets, like Sidney, invoke the metaphor of the pregnant wit. As Jonas explains in *The Birth of Mankind*, his “labour and pains” are “a very charitable and laudable deed” as it assists midwives who “chiefly help and succour the good women in their most painful labour and throngs” (206).<sup>59</sup> This trope is so essential to the genre that even Jane Sharpe, the only known woman writer of an early modern midwife manual, repeats it in justification of collating her midwife manual from continental texts and placing them “in our mother tongue” as it “would save us a great deal of needless labour” (13).<sup>60</sup> Indeed, authorship is built upon the female body.

At the same time male writers of midwife manuals depend upon the female body for establishing authorship, they also unwittingly create a discourse of female authorship rooted in the maternal body and, more specifically, give authorial agency to the maternal imagination. A notable example is Nicholas Culpeper’s popular midwife manual, *Directory for Midwives* (1651). Trying to discern reasons for the unpredictable products

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<sup>59</sup> Hobby, ed., *The Birth of Mankind* (see note 4).

<sup>60</sup> Jane Sharpe, *The Midwives Book, Or the Whole Art of Midwifery Discovered*, ed. Elaine Hobby (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999).

of the womb, such as “ill formation of the child,” Culpeper lists the imagination as a culprit: “Sometimes there is an extraordinary cause, as imagination, when the Mother is frightened, or imagineth strange things, or longeth vehemently for some meat which if she have not, the child hath a mark of the colour of shape or what she desired, of which there are many Examples” (145). The image actually imprints itself onto the child’s body because the imagination “makes a great admiration or terrour in the mother when the forming faculty is at work” (146). Culpeper lists the results: a six-fingered child, “hair where it should not be,” any bestial resemblance, and a hare-lip child, which comes about “when she seeth any thing cut or divided with a Cleaver” (146). Because the maternal imagination has the potential to author an unauthorized creation, it needs to be supervised by men. So one purpose of the midwife manuals is to warn fathers and provide them with the knowledge needed to ensure a proper, orderly pregnancy and birth. As Laqueur notes,

But being male and being a father, having what it takes to produce the more powerful seed, is the ascendancy of mind over the senses, of order over disorder, legitimacy over illegitimacy. Thus the inability of women to conceive within themselves becomes an instance...of the relative weakness of her mind. Since normal conception is, in a sense, the male having an idea in the woman’s body, then abnormal conception, the mola, is a conceit for her having an ill-gotten and inadequate idea of her own. Seeds of life and seeds of wisdom might well come to the same thing.<sup>61</sup>

By assuming the masculine activity of forming children, the maternal imagination transgresses the natural process of conception and births aberrations.

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<sup>61</sup> Laqueur, 59.

But before looking closer at the role that the maternal imagination plays in authoring fantastical births, we should more fully comprehend early modern depictions of the imagination as a necessary danger for poetic creation. In general, the imagination was a “faculty for the most part uncontrolled and immoral--a faculty forever distorting and lying, irrational, unstable, flitting, and insubstantial, haphazardly making and marring, dangerously tied to emotions, feigning idly and purposelessly.”<sup>62</sup> And yet, the imagination and its concomitant term, fancy, were essential for poetic creation. Robert Burton, for instance, writes in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* that “In Poets and Painters *Imagination* forcibly workes, as appears by their severall fictions.”<sup>63</sup> In Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Theseus tells Hippolyta,

...as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name. (5.1.14-17)<sup>64</sup>

Poets materialize the imagination by writing stories; essentially, they make the intangible, tangible. Theseus describes the material effects of imagination, paralleling it to how poets can materialize stories from the imagination. Poets take on a role as creator. Indeed, poets themselves often cited the power of poetic creation. In her preface to *The Blazing World* (1666), Margaret Cavendish delineates fancy from reason: “*fictions* are an issue of man’s

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<sup>62</sup> William Rossky, “Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 5 (1958): 73.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, volume 1, eds. Thomas Faulkner, et al., (New York: Oxford UP, 1989), 152.

<sup>64</sup> William Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Norton Shakespeare Volume I: The Early Plays and Poems*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al., (New York: Norton, 2008).

fancy, framed in his own mind...whether the thing he fancies, be really existent without his mind or not....The end of reason, is truth; the end of fancy, is fiction" (123).<sup>65</sup> Even Milton recognizes fancy as the poet's friend. In "L' Allegro," Milton identifies drama as "sweetest Shakespear fancies child" (l.133).<sup>66</sup> Undeniably, the imagination is required for poetic authorship.

This requirement, however, did not erase the fact that the imagination had strong associations with the disorderly female body.<sup>67</sup> Poets found themselves in a bind because the male poet needed the metaphorical womb as incubator of invention. As Katherine Maus argues, "the female body provides a risky but compelling model for the structure of male poetic subjectivity in the English Renaissance,"<sup>68</sup> likewise, Jennifer Keith traces this trope throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the "male poetic subject represents himself not through excluding but through including the feminine."<sup>69</sup> Like the female body, the imagination was needed for creation. So poets, like writers of midwife manuals, made sure to handle the imagination properly.

In *Defense of Poesy*, Sidney models how the poet can wrangle the imagination for virtuous ends. For one, a poet's imaginative fictions triumph over Nature. Claiming

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<sup>65</sup> Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (New York: Penguin, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> John Milton, "L' Allegro," *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), pp. 66-71.

<sup>67</sup> Dorothy Stephens, "'Newes of devils': Feminine Sprights in Masculine Minds in *The Faerie Queene*," *English Literary Renaissance* 23.2 (1993): 363-381.

<sup>68</sup> Katharine Maus, "A Womb of His Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body," *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, ed. James Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 266-288; 268.

<sup>69</sup> Jennifer Keith, *Poetry and the Feminine from Behn to Cowper* (Newark: U of Delaware Press, 2005), 85.

that the poet is superior to Nature--“Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden”-  
-Sidney questions whether Nature could “have brought so true a lover as Theanges, so  
constant a friend as Pylades, so valiant a man every way as Virgil’s Aneas” (216). Each  
one of these classical examples is a paragon of virtue, and Sidney can claim virtue as a  
byproduct of poetic invention. In explaining how poets birth such virtue, Sidney writes,

...the skill of each artificer standeth in that *idea* or fore-conceit of the work, and  
not in the work itself. And that the poet hath that *idea* is manifest, by delivering  
them forth in such excellency as he had imagined them. Which delivering forth  
also is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in  
the air; but so far substantially it worketh, not only to make a Cyrus, which had  
been but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus  
upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that  
maker made him. (216-217).

Sidney carefully negotiates the amount of imagination needed for poetic creation. It is  
part of poetic conception, but poesy “is not wholly imaginative.” Sidney delineates  
between imagination just for imagination’s sake--those who use it to “build castles in the  
sky”--and imagination in service of virtue. Imagination, when used properly, not only  
brings forth paragons of virtue, which Sidney admits nature could do as well, but more  
importantly also replicates virtue in others, “to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make  
many Cyruses.” Here, Sidney’s use of Cyrus involves the Renaissance idea that poesy is  
*mimesis* and its end is “to teach and delight” (217). The tale of Cyrus, found in  
Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, belonged to the genre called the mirror of princes, a genre that  
instructed monarchs on how to be virtuous rulers. In this regard, imagination via poetic  
creation participates in nation building, as well. Imagination can be constructive.

Sidney also ponders the dangers of an unruly imagination. As Sidney writes to his sister, Mary, his *Arcadia* comes from “young head, not so well stayed as I would it were, (and shall be when God will), hauing many many fancies begotten in it, if it had not ben in some way deliured, would have growen a monster” (A4r). In other words, if Sidney had not written *Arcadia* when he did, his youthful imagination might deform the literary work. Underlying Sidney’s description of a young poet’s imagination is the dangers of the maternal imagination. “Many fancies begotten” from a “young head” must be properly “delivered” to avoid monstrosity. In the *Defense of Poetry*, Sidney tiptoes about the imagination due to its association with the feminine. In fact, Sidney paradoxically disavows the feminized imagination while inundating his description of poetic creation with birth imagery, especially with the idea that poets “deliver forth” their conceived ideas. Ideas, once manifested, are the child of the male poet. Nowhere is a woman found.

Likewise, Sidney leaves women out of the Creation process, both in the sense of God’s creation of the world and a poet’s creation of new nature. God’s creation of the world and human is a co-gendered, co-authorship--“Let us make men in our image,” and Proverbs 8, a chapter spoken by the female character Wisdom states that she was with God in the beginning: “The Lord hath possessed me in the beginning of his waie: *I was* before his workes of olde. I was set vp from euerlasting, from the beginning & before the earth” (8:22-23).<sup>70</sup> The gloss on these verses in the Geneva Bible indicates, too, that female Wisdom was manifested in Jesus, “whome S.Iohn calleth the worde [yet] was in [the] beginin, Iohn 1,1).” What this note does is implicitly connect creation and

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<sup>70</sup> *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: U of Wisconsin P, 1969).



authorship to both genders by referring us to Christ as the Word of God, who comes through the female body of Mary. Sidney, however, figures authorship as singularly masculine--a one-sex model. Appropriating the role of God the Creator-Poet as the model for all poets, Sidney thanks God for endowing poets with dominion “over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings” (217). The poet is not subjected to Nature but able to bring about another nature--the male poet is better than female nature. He has the “divine breath” that gives life. With the correct handling, male poets could funnel nature from the imagination.

When we use Sidney’s *ars poetica* as a lens through which to read stories of monstrous births, what becomes illuminated is that the maternal imagination is not just dangerous because of its doubled-association with the female body, but also because the maternal imagination, left to its own devices, can destroy nature. In fact, reading midwife manuals for their theories of the maternal body and maternal imagination exposes a punitive model of female authorship that was attractive for early modern culture, which sought to naturalize authorship as solely masculine. Midwife manuals castigated the maternal imagination as unnatural and disorderly because it violated the very grounds upon which patriarchal creation stories were built. Marie-Hélène Huet attributes the monstrosity of the maternal imagination to a subversion of hierarchy (mother’s imagination over father’s form or matter and art over nature): “If Art must imitate Nature, in cases of monstrous procreation, Nature imitates Art.”<sup>71</sup> So, while Sidney praises the

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<sup>71</sup> Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1993), 7.

poet's ability to "bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as were never in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like" (216), the praise is tempered by the fact that the poet only creates on paper; he does not materialize his poetic manifestations in nature. The maternal body and its imagination, however, gives "divine breath" to things which should not exist in nature. Mothers can create poetic monstrosity.

Monsters dominated early modern print culture in genres like ballads and pamphlets, and writers of midwife manuals assumed the task of explaining their origins. These origin narratives function to warn against too much female authorial agency. Female agency in some of these stories is closely tied to female desire and sexuality. Culpeper, for instance, emphasizes that the imagination can produce monstrosity if the mother is frightened but also if the mother "longeth vehemently for some meat which if she have not, the child hath a mark of the colour of shape or what she desired, of which there are many Examples" (145). The image that the mother imprints upon the child is a marker of her desire. Jane Sharpe relates two similar situations in which the pregnant mother contemplates upon another person and gives birth to children with that likeness. In one instance, the mother becomes frightened and the "unfitness of the matter hinders formation": "Imagination can do much, as a woman that lookt on a Blackmore brought forth a child like to a Blackmore" (92). In another case, the strength of the imagination overtakes the forming faculty of the child, so that this particular mother "brought forth a child all hairy like a Camel, because she usually said prayers kneeling before the image of St. *John Baptist* who was clothed with camels hair" (92). Craving meat, being curious

about a “Blackmore,” and praying too often before an image of the hairy John the Baptist are tame maternal desires that do little harm to the child.

However, Culpeper talks at length about the dangers of a pregnant woman’s sexual desire:

the forming faculty doth not erre of it self, but is seduced by the imagination, or frustrated to its ends, from a fault of the Spirits, the heat or matter. Therefore imagination is the cause of Monsters. For Histories mention that women with child, by beholding men in vizards, have brought forth Monsters with horns, and beaks, and cloven feet. (152)

Culpeper’s description echoes Aristotle’s gendered form/mind and matter/body divide. The maternal body and imagination disrupt the male “forming faculty” and usurp the male action of creation. Also at play is unchecked female sexuality. Culpeper casts the imagination as a feminine seductress who unlawfully controls the masculine forming faculty--the soul and mind. Moreover, women are at fault for they are active in “beholding” men. Women have agency in the gaze, which is traditionally a masculine role.<sup>72</sup> Women and the feminine imagination usurp masculine agency and thereby author deformity. Culpeper continues: “Doctors cannot cure Monsters, yet they are to admonish women with child not to look upon Monsters” during their pregnancy (153). The fault lies with the woman and their actions. If monsters are incurable, then men should do their best to be on guard for women’s distorting imagination, as the woman *and* her imagination are both unpredictable.

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<sup>72</sup> See Jean Howard, “The Materiality of Ideology: Women as Spectators, Spectacles, and Paying Costumers in the English Public Theater,” in *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1994), 74-93; and Thomas P. Anderson, ““All Things Visible in Heaven, or Earth”: Reading the Illustrations of the 1688 Edition of *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 38.3 (2004): 157-181.

Sexual desire in pregnant women can also mask a wife's infidelity. Midwife manuals sometimes attributed the resemblance between parents and children to the mother's imagination. This would seem to be a useful phenomenon that supports patriarchal culture and inheritance laws as it ostensibly helps confirm women's fidelity or infidelity. However, midwife manuals misconstrued the maternal body and imagination as so inherently deceptive that it could cloak infidelity as fidelity. According to Laevinus Lemnius's *A Discourse touching Generation* (1664), the likeness of a child to its father does not indicate paternity: "So whilst the Man and Woman embrace, if the Woman think of the mans countenance, and look upon him, or think, of anyone else, that likness will the Child represent. For such is the power of the Imagination, that when the Woman doth inventively behold anything, she will produce something like that she beheld" (43). It is not who the woman is sleeping with but of whom the woman is *thinking*, desiring. Lemnius provides an example of how this works: "Hence it is, that a woman may cause her Child to have a strange Form, and nothing like to the Father. So Woman that had lain with another besides her Husband, fearing lest her Husband should come in the mean time, after 9 Moneths she brought forth a Child not like the party that she lay with, but like her Husband that was absent" (46). He follows this example with an epigram by Sir Thomas More, before succinctly concluding that "Hence...the Argument is vain to assign the Father from the likeness of the Child" (48). Lemnius, repeating cultural commonplaces, reveals that the maternal imagination contains untrustworthy "invention." A child's physical features should secure paternity and patriarchal social order, so to throw appearance into question was to throw patriarchal order off balance. In such cases,

the maternal imagination does not birth a monster but “a child who actually resembles the legitimate spouse who did not father it, a child in perfect harmony with nature’s plan,” and the mother stands as “the *fantastic* artist, one who masters proportions, captures perspective, and produces the deceptive appearances that Plato attributed only to the best sculptors and painters.”<sup>73</sup> Female authorship via maternal imagination is unnatural, deceptive, and troublesome to patriarchal society.

The maternal imagination cast as devious and the root of monstrosity resonated greatly with Christian narratives of Eve, the inherently sinful woman. One story found in Culpeper’s midwife manual particularly speaks to early modern patriarchal anxiety over pregnancy and the assumed innate deviant nature of women. According to Culpeper, a woman named Anna Troperim in 1575 “brought forth two Serpents with her child.” He writes,

she had drunk water in a Brook in wood near *Basil*, where she thought she drank the Spawn of a Serpent, for a little after that, her belly swelled, and three months after she was big with child, and the Serpents grew as the child did. Her belly was so big that she carried it in a swathing Band. She was delivered at last of a lean male child, and (because they suspect Worms or Snaks from the knawing and strange motion she felt that year) they put a bason of milk under her, and when they expected an afterbirth, out came a Serpent, which she saw, and perceived another coming forth, they were an ell [about 45 inches] long, and as thick as a child’s arm. (152)

In Culpeper’s highly improbable story while the maternal imagination is not to blame, the story speaks volumes about the early modern culture’s association of women with the unnatural. Furthermore, that the monstrous birth involves a woman’s intake of serpent

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<sup>73</sup> Huet, 80.

spawn alludes to the Fall narrative. Another source of monstrosity, then, is Eve's unnatural cavorting with the serpentine Satan. Sexualized portraits of Eve and the Serpent abound in the Renaissance, which insinuate bestiality and an illicit pregnancy that produces unnatural offspring. Lucy Hutchinson, speaking of the mother's curse, writes that within a mother's womb can grow "What sad abortions, what cross births ensue: / What monsters, what unnatural vipers come / Eating their passage through their parent's womb" (5.164-166).<sup>74</sup> Sin, itself, is feminine as seen in Milton's representation of Sin as a "snaky sorceress" (2.724) who "seemed woman to the waist, and fair, / But ended foul in many a scaly fold / Voluminous and vast, a serpent armed" (2.650-52).<sup>75</sup> Sin is the ultimate embodiment of unlawful authorship. Satan's desire to topple God is what births Sin, and she lovingly calls him "my author" (2.864). Female authorship as rooted in the maternal body is deceptive, monstrous, and sinful. The maternal body is a site of fallen authorship. It is with this notion that we turn to Milton's Eden for another origin story about female authorship.

### **Imagining the Fall**

Claiming Milton's Eve as a female author might seem counterintuitive for a couple of reasons. For one, many early modern women writers produced their own representations of the Fall and Eve, and some might argue that we look at those examples for theories of female authorship.<sup>76</sup> However, my project is not so much about early

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<sup>74</sup> Lucy Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. David Norbrook (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

<sup>75</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harlow, England: Longman, 1998).

<sup>76</sup> For scholarship on Eve, the Fall narrative, and women writers see Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton UP, 1987); Michelle M. Dowd and Thomas Festa, eds.,

modern women writers as it is about finding alternative types of female authorship. Two, while these women writers (and other male writers) offer different insights about Eve, Milton's Eve signifies a particular Eve with which feminist literary criticism often wrestles. Some scholars see *Paradise Lost* and Eve as generative of women's authorship whereas others have lambasted Milton for not endowing Eve with agency.<sup>77</sup> This latter strand of criticism emphasizes the monopolizing force of male authorship in *Paradise Lost*. Granted, Milton's epic ostensibly epitomizes an early modern masculine authorship. As Marcia Landy writes, "The male 'disposes' and 'authors'; the female is identified with the 'creation' and the 'work;'" woman "is deprived of authority and punished for attempting to usurp it."<sup>78</sup> Certainly, Milton tells us that God places "true authority in men" (4.295). All identified authors are male—God, Adam, and Satan. To the Son and Adam, God is "author of all being" (3.374) and "author of this universe" (8.360), respectively. Eve addresses Adam as "My author and disposer" (4.635) while Sin heralds Satan as "my father, ...my author" (2.864). Repeatedly, Milton reinforces a model of patriarchal authorship in which male/creator/agent acts upon female/creation/object. Milton himself figures into this type of authorship--a male poet who writes of creation. Sandra Gilbert famously labels *Paradise Lost* as "patriarchal poetry" and asks, "what if such a fiercely masculine cosmic Author is the sole legitimate model for all earthly

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*Early Modern Women on the Fall*; and Shannon Miller, *Engendering the Fall: John Milton and Seventeenth-Century Women Writers* (Philadelphia: U of Penn P, 2008).

<sup>77</sup> For Eve in relation to generative authorship, see Shannon Miller, and Joseph Wittreich, Joseph, *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987). Perhaps Milton's most skeptical critics regarding female authorship and the anxious influence of Milton on women writers is Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's classic monograph, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Yale UP, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Marcia Landy, "Kinship and the Role of Women in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 4 (1972): 3-18; 7, 10.

authors?”<sup>79</sup> For Gilbert, Milton is equal to God, “[a]nd like God...he is male. Indeed as a male poet justifying the ways of a male deity to male readers, he rigorously excludes all females from the heaven of his poem.”<sup>80</sup> The excess of male authorship bars female authorship in *Paradise Lost*.

Gilbert’s judgment, though, is too rash. As other scholars have discussed, female authorship *does* exist in Milton’s Eden, although it is not as noticeable or even as flattering as Milton’s portrayal of male authorship. Barbara Lewalski casts Eve as a creator of literary genres: Eve “‘invents’ the love sonnet” and “the first autobiographical narrative,” and “perfect[s] the tragic lament.”<sup>81</sup> Eve is a poet. Peter Herman also questions whether patriarchal authorship is the only available model in *Paradise Lost*. While the epic’s “authority figures are emphatically masculine (God, Adam, Satan, Michael, Raphael), Milton feminizes the poetic imagination, transforming his own dependence on women.”<sup>82</sup> The epic voice in Book 9 describes poetic creation in terms of female authorship. The Muse “brings” the epic “nightly to [his] ear” (9.47): “my celestial patroness, who deigns / Her nightly visitation unimplored, / And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires / Easy my unpremeditated verse:” (9.21-24). For Herman, these

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<sup>79</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, “Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton’s Bogey,” *PLMA* 93.3 (1978): 368-82; 368.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>81</sup> Barbara Lewalski, “The Genres of *Paradise Lost*,” *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis Danielson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 113-129; 125.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Herman, “Composing *Paradise Lost*: Blindness and the Feminine,” *Authors at Work: The Creative Environment* (Woodbridge, England: Brewer, 2009), 129-145; 143.



moments demonstrate that creation “takes place in the ear, not the hand, or the eye.”<sup>83</sup> (138). Both Lewalski and Herman model inventive ways of viewing female authorship and both cast it in a positive light. Lewalski gives credence to women writers’ agency by implicitly tracing them back to Eve, an originator of genre while Herman suggests that the feminine imagination constructs Eden and Milton’s epic. Herman’s reading, particularly, corrects the negative connotation of the early modern feminine imagination, as seen in the previous section; however, *Paradise Lost* does reinforce the narrative of destructive maternal imagination and posits Eve as the mother of a fallen authorship.

By identifying and analyzing this less flattering portrayal of female authorship, I do not mean to contribute to the misogynist/pro-Milton debate but rather provide a more historically responsible depiction of female authorship in *Paradise Lost* that uncovers early modern patriarchal anxieties surrounding the maternal imagination.<sup>84</sup> Like the midwife manuals, *Paradise Lost* denounces female authorship while simultaneously lending agency to it. Milton does not bar female authorship from paradise but weaves it into the Creation and Fall narratives, allowing for its existence only to showcase its fallibility, and by doing so, naturalizes female authorship as deviant.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>84</sup> For recent scholarship on Milton’s treatment of Eve, see Elisabeth Liebert, “Rendering ‘More Equal’: Eve’s Changing Discourse in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 37.3 (2003): 152-165; and Peter Herman, “‘The More to Draw His Love’: *Paradise Lost* and the Critique of Misogyny,” *Destabilizing Milton: Paradise Lost and the Poetics of Incertitude* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 127-54. Early feminist readings of Milton’s Eve include Sandra Gilbert, “Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers,” Christine Froula, “When Eve Reads Milton: Undoing the Canonical Economy,” *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983): 321-47; Diane McColley, *Milton’s Eve* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1983); Joseph Wittreich, *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987); and Anne Ferry, “Milton’s Creation of Eve,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 28.1 (1988): 113-32.

In *Paradise Lost*, the Fall operates as metaphor for the improper, devilish nature of female authorship, reinforcing a patriarchal model of authorship. Adam and Eve's relationship embodies the mind/body hierarchy, which Milton depicts as reason (man) properly governing fancy (woman). These hierarchal binaries, which help gender authorship as masculine, appear primarily in Eve's and Adam's dream sequences in *Paradise Lost*. I propose that Eve's initial dream and her narration of it in Books 4 and 5 offer a version of destructive, fallen female authorship rooted in the maternal body and maternal imagination, or fancy. Analyzing the role of the imagination, or fancy, in Eve's dream in Books 4 and 5, and in Adam's dream in Book 8, I argue that Milton establishes a gendered distinction between proper and improper uses of the imagination. The maternal body distorts the imagination resulting in a destructive female authorship while Adam's male imagination properly constructs bodies--mind/form acting upon body/matter. Like the mothers of midwife manuals, Eve's imagination transgresses the hierarchy of authorship, giving birth to destruction and monstrosity in the form of sin and death.

*Paradise Lost* makes fancy, or the imagination, synonymous with feminine deceit and gives it devilish connotations. In the hands of Satan and Eve, the imagination engenders destruction. We first see this in Book 4 as Satan crouches by a slumbering Eve:

Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve  
Assaying by his devilish art to reach  
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge  
Illusions as he list, phantasms, and dreams,  
Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint

The animal spirits that from pure blood arise  
Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise  
At least distempered, discontented thoughts,  
Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires  
Blown up with high conceits engendering pride (4.800-809)

Satan's "devilish art" "engenders" a dream in Eve that foreshadows the Fall. When Eve describes her dream to Adam, she tells of an angel who sounds like Adam and who leads her to the forbidden tree of knowledge, which "seemed / Much fairer to my fancy than by day" (5.51-53). The angel samples the fruit, urging Eve to also partake. She does and quickly awakens, scared yet happy "to find this but a dream!" (5.93). Satan's inspiring of Eve's dream is the first time the word "fancy" appears in *Paradise Lost*, and Eve's narration of the dream is the second instance of the word "fancy," making a subtle correlation between Eve and Satan. Both Satan and Eve possess destructive fancy.

Eve's dream is a satanic pregnancy that echoes stories of monstrous births.<sup>85</sup> While Eve is never pregnant, her epitaph, "mother of mankind" (which Raphael bestows upon her shortly after Eve relates her dream to Adam), situates her as always already a maternal body with a maternal imagination (5.387). The above passage highly sexualizes Satan's interaction with Eve and implies that her dream is a metaphorical pregnancy of the Fall, fathered by Satan. Eve gives birth to the Fall when she narrates her dream to

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<sup>85</sup> Scholars have generally read Eve's dream as indicative of her natural innocence or depravity. While not comprehensive, the following is a list of scholars who have discussed Eve's dream: Murray Bundy, "Eve's Dream and the Temptation in *Paradise Lost*," *Research Studies of the State College of Washington* 10 (1942): 273-91; W.B. Hunter, "Eve's Demonic Dream," *ELH* 13.4 (1946): 255-65; A.B. Chambers, "Three Notes on Eve's Dream in '*Paradise Lost*,'" *Philological Quarterly* 46.2 (1967): 186-93; Jane Petty, "The Voice at Eve's Ear in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 42-47; William Riggs, "The Temptation of Milton's Eve: 'Words, Impregn'd / With Reason,'" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 94.3 (1995): 365-92; and Robert Wignura, "Eve's Dream, Interpretation, and Shifting Paradigms: Books Four and Five of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 49 (2009): 108-23.

Adam, bringing the first germ of destruction into Eden. Satan stirs up “distempered, discontented thoughts,” a pun on the content of the imagination/womb. Her thoughts are “blown up with high conceits engendering pride.” The final line rings conception.

Satan’s inspiring dream recalls the dangers of the maternal imagination found in midwife manuals. Guillemaeau’s *Child-birth or, The Happy Deliverie of Women* (1612), for instance, advises readers about what types of stories are safe for pregnant women as “passions of the mind” can mar children: “those which haue conceiued, ought to be preferued from all feare, sadnesse, and disquietnes of mind, without speaking or doing anything that may offend or vexe them; so that discreet women, and such as desire to haue children, will not giue eare vnto lamentable and fearefull tales of storyes” (26).

Guillemeau emphasizes the danger that unfit stories pose to women if they “give eare” to them (women, here, being at fault for listening). Eve’s dream, read in conversation with midwife manuals, demonizes female authorship and casts women as inherently deceptive in procreation.

While Eve’s nightmare and the origins of it cast her as the mother in a midwife manual, Adam’s analysis of her dream posits him as the male author of the midwife manual. Adam, like the writers of midwife manuals, claims superior knowledge over the imagination and rationalizes Eve’s dream. Adam explains that Eve’s mental faculties are imbalanced and potentially destructive:

Yet evil whence? In thee can harbour none,  
Created pure. But know that in the soul  
Are many lesser faculties that serve  
Reason as chief; among these fancy next  
Her office holds; of all external things,

Which the five watchful sense represent,  
She forms imaginations, airy shapes,  
Which reason joining or disjoining, frames  
All what we affirm or what deny, and call  
Our knowledge or opinion; then retires  
Into her private cell when nature rests.  
Oft in her absence mimic fancy wakes  
To imitate her; but misjoining shapes,  
Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams,  
Ill matching words and deeds long past or late (5.99-113).

Adam places reason and fancy in a hierarchy where reason is “chief” to fancy, “the lesser faculty.” Reason needs to remain in control, doing the action--“forms,” “joins,” or “disjoins”--and fancy follows reason. Reason gives form to “shapes;” but in its absence, fancy “shapes,” moving from its place as a noun to an action (similar to the way that the female body is a creation, rather than a creator). Adam, echoing sentiments from Guillemeau and other writers of midwife manuals, discusses the danger of unsupervised fancy, which rebels and usurps the role of reason only to produce disorder--“wild work” and “ill matching words and deeds.” If not subject to reason, fancy and the maternal imagination become destructive.

The reason/fancy hierarchy is gendered just as the mind/body hierarchy is. Reason becomes the domain of man and God while fancy remains associated with the inferior woman and Satan. Although Adam gives Reason a feminine pronoun (she), reason is masculinized through its association with the male mind. The first time we see Adam and Eve, Milton’s extended blazon of the blissful pair correlates Adam with the mind/reason and Eve with the body: “For contemplation he and valour formed, / For softness she and sweet attractive grace” (4.297-298). Just as Eve yields to Adam, fancy should to reason.

Further indication of the reason/fancy gender hierarchy is evident in Adam's two dreams, in which reason properly governs fancy and creates another pure form, Eve. In Adam's first dream, that of his creation, the newborn Adam believes that a dream appears to him, "whose inward apparition gently moved / [His] fancy to believe [he] had being" (8.288; 293-94). The divine dream guides Adam through Eden, and he walks past numerous trees, "Loaden with the fairest fruit... / Tempting stirred in me sudden appetite / To pluck and eat" (8.307-309), but he refrains. Adam's dream, chronologically the first dream in Eden, recalls Eve's dream in Book 5. The resemblances between Adam's and Eve's dreams are uncanny. In Eve's dream, an angel "pluck[s]" and "taste[s]" of the forbidden fruit and offers it to Eve, who receives it with a "quickened appetite" (5.65; 85). The two dreams reflect the gendered hierarchy of reason and fancy. Eve's fancy tempts her, and she yields whereas Adam's fancy serves to convince Adam of his own existence. Adam's fancy, it seems, properly serves reason unlike Eve's fancy.

Fancy also appears in Adam's second dream—the one of Eve's creation. God puts Adam to sleep but leaves active "the cell / Of fancy" in order to make Eve (8.460-461). Of this scene, Paul Stevens notes that "Adam's imagination of Eve is a perception or reflection of God's creativity."<sup>86</sup> But more aptly stated is that Adam guides his imagination by reason. Remember, he communes with God and rationalizes why he needs a companion. As in his previous dream, Adam's fancy in his second dream appropriately serves reason, culminating in a constructive authorship. Adam's second

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<sup>86</sup> Paul Stevens, *Imagination and the Presence of Shakespeare in Paradise Lost* (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1985), 219.

dream also literalizes the early modern idea that both male authorship and authority are dependent upon the female body.

Fancy does not just remain in dreams, though. It eventually materializes into the Fall. Eve's fantastic dream becomes a reality. The gendered hierarchy of reason and fancy are present in the Fall as Milton understands the Fall as female rebellion (fancy) against male authority (reason). Although in Adam's interpretation of Eve's nightmare, Adam reassures Eve that she has done nothing wrong but that fancy generates her nightmare, moments before the Fall Adam sharply cautions Eve about deceptive fancy. Eve wants to leave Adam and work individually, which Adam reads as unfiltered desire to disobey God's will and Adam's authority. He comments,

God left free the will, for what obeys  
Reason, is free, and reason he make right,  
But bid her well beware, and still erect,  
Lest by some fair appearing good surprised  
She dictate false, and misinform the will  
To do what God expressly hath forbid.  
Not then mistrust, but tender love enjoins,  
That I should mind thee oft, and mind thou me.  
Firm we subsist, yet possible to swerve,  
Since reason not impossibly may meet  
Some specious object by the foe suborned,  
And fall into deception unaware,  
Not keeping strictest watch, as she was warned.  
Seek not temptation then, which to avoid  
Were better; and most likely if from me  
Thou sever not: trial will come unsought. (9.351-366)

Adam insists that reason can be tricked if one is not careful. Eve, being the weaker sex, should remain where Adam can protect her--where she can be properly led by masculine reason. Adam also echoes God's statement that Adam and Eve are "authors to themselves

in all” and “they themselves ordained their Fall” through self-temptation (3.122, 128).

Adam reminds Eve that their reason is made “firm” but could “swerve.” Godlike Adam, however, permits Eve to test her free will and reason. She leaves his side and soon encounters the serpentine Satan.

Satan embodies deception, confuses Eve’s reasoning skills, and offers her the chance to ascend from her subordinate position. Satan uses the misogynistic argument about woman’s weak, inept mind and body, remarking that he must take hold of “Occasion which now smiles” (9.480)--the absence of Adam, whose “higher intellectual” and “Heroic build” intimidate Satan (9.483-485). Praising Eve as “Sovereign Mistress,” “goddess among gods” and “Empress...resplendent Eve,” (9.532, 547, 568), Satan woos Eve with the promise of knowledge and authority. Eve succumbs. In highly sexualized language (like found in Satan’s fathering of Eve’s dream), Milton writes that Satan “impregn[s]” Eve “with reason, to her seeming” (9.737, 738). His rhetoric is believable but faulty. Eve’s body and mind yield to fancy cloaked as reason, as she indulges in the offered fruit, experiencing a “delight till then... / In fruit she never tasted, whether true / Or fancied so” (9.787-89). The “or” in the latter line signals a connection between the Fall (the true time Eve eats of the fruit) and Eve’s dream (the “fancied” time she eats fruit). For the second time, Eve becomes pregnant with ill deed, which this time comes to full fruition. The serpent’s story, his seeming logic, and his charming, physical appearance work upon Eve’s imagination, similarly to how fantastical stories and horrendous sights influence mothers’ mind in midwife manuals. Soon Eve imprints onto another body--Adam.



Eve's pregnant actions are at full term when she returns to Adam. As she shares her newly acquired knowledge with him, she metaphorically births monstrosity, death, and destruction. Milton's descriptions of Eve combine her words with her body, suggesting an embodied female authorship that is deceitful and fallen. Eve, like Satan, uses her words to seduce. Speaking to Adam, Eve's face shows "prologue, and apology to prompt," and she narrates her transgression "with bland words" (9.854, 855). When Eve finishes her story, Milton writes that, "Eve with countenance blithe her story told" (9.886). Eve's body is inseparable from her deceptive words. Alastair Fowler notes, "Eve's expression...is like the *prologue*-speaker of a play, and continues to help out her words, like the prompter" and "recall[s] the theatrical simile," in which the epic voice describes Satan's approach to Eve: Satan is as "some orator renowned" who with "each act won audience ere the tongue" (9.670, 74).<sup>87</sup> For Milton, female authorship mirrors devilish deception. Eve dramatizes the fears of anti-theatricalist, Philip Stubbes, who wrote almost a decade earlier than *Paradise Lost*, that plays (whether moral or immoral), "are quite contrarie to word of grace, and sucked out of the Deuills Teates, to nourish us in Idolatrie, Heathenrie, and sinne."<sup>88</sup> Eve's words and body deliver Adam into evil.

Eve recreates a horrifying story for Adam to hear, and Milton invites readers to watch the tragedy unfold. Eve's tale affects Adam the same way that the angel in Eve's dream affects Eve in Book 5. The angel reaches for the fruit "with ventrous arm. / He plucked, he tasted; me damp horror chilled / At such bold words vouched with a deed so

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<sup>87</sup> Fowler, 519n853-4.

<sup>88</sup> Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses...* (London, 1585), L6r.

bold” (5.64-66). Listening to Eve, Adam also experiences a “horror chill” (9.890). He firmly reprimands Eve: “Bold deed thou hast presumed, adventurous Eve” (9.921). Adam connects Eve to Satan--the authors of “bold words” and “bold deed.” Finally, Adam correlates Eve with ungoverned fancy, as his response alludes to his interpretation of her dream. Fancy most often yields “Ill matching words and deeds” (5.113). Eve, with ill deeds, has produced a fallen authorship.

All is not lost, however. Before departing Eden, Eve has another dream that typologically recapitulates and corrects her earlier one. Instead of foreshadowing destruction, this dream is “gentle” and “portending good” (12.595, 596). The difference lies within who and what controls Eve’s dream. In the first dream, it was Satan who engendered fancy whereas God authors her dream. Eve explains to Adam, “God is also in sleep, and dreams advise” (12.611). Eve’s final dream looks more like Adam’s dreams in Book 8 where God authors Adam’s dreams and reason governs Adam’s imagination and fancy. There is no trace of fancy in Eve’s final dream. Michael, instead, vaguely comments that Eve’s “spirits” are “composed / To meek submission” (12.596-597). Eve’s fancy finally finds its proper place in the hierarchy of faculties.

Eve’s first dream was a “devilish version of the Annunciation,” with Satan’s inspiration of the dream perversely replicating Gabriel’s delivering of the Annunciation to Mary: “he quite literally enunciated God’s Word: the Word entered Mary’s ear, she conceived, and the Word became flesh.”<sup>89</sup> The god-inspired dream reveals that Eve will be mother of salvation. God gifts Eve with redemption. Eve initially authors destruction

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<sup>89</sup> A.B. Chambers, “Three Notes on Eve’s Dream in *Paradise Lost*,” *Philological Quarterly* 46:2 (1967): 186-193. 193; 191.

but, thanks to her antitype Mary, can now function typologically to author salvation through Christ, the Word Incarnate. From Eve in *Paradise Lost*, I move to Mary in Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing*, proposing that the tempering of Eve's imagination parallels the tempering of Mary's role in the Immaculate Conception. Just as Eve's authorship is reduced to her body, via her typological relationship with Mary, Mary is reduced to her body so as to minimize her authority in the Redemption narrative. Still, as Leigh and others suggest, Mary possesses authorial agency in her maternal body.

### **Rewriting the Fall: Mary and Female Authorship**

Mary found herself at the forefront of many early modern religious debates, which were no more about Mary than other religious debates were about Eve. Rather, Mary, even in Protestant England, remained a central symbol for discussing familial relations, political leanings, and religious beliefs.<sup>90</sup> Reformers could not deny Mary her station in Christianity, so they sought to demystify her role in the Redemption narrative while promoting Christ as the true figure of worship. As Gary Waller notes, Protestant iconoclasm contains a “distinctive form of masculinist anxiety, a deep-rooted

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<sup>90</sup> Scholars have shown that the shift from Catholicism to Protestantism was never as tidy as we would like to believe; people did not automatically disavow their Catholic beliefs. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992); Ronald Corthell, et al. Eds. *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame UP, 2007).

Mary has become more and more prominent in early modern literary scholarship. Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Frances E. Dolan, “The Command of Mary: Marian Devotion, Henrietta Maria's Intercession, and Catholic Motherhood” in *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), 95-156; “Marian Devotion and Maternal Authority in Seventeenth-Century England” in *Maternal Measures: Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 282-292; and Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mother in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011).

distinctively Protestant misogyny directed at women and female experience;” the veneration of Mary “presented Protestants not only with an example of visible idolatry but also specifically with the further provocation of suspected worship of the female.”<sup>91</sup> But not all critiques of the Virgin were Protestant. Some members of the Catholic Counter-Reformation even began to emphasize Joseph more than Mary in depictions and discussions of the Holy Family.<sup>92</sup> Regardless of religion, seventeenth-century commentators on Mariolatry often “contested women’s authority as mothers as much as they did the Virgin Mary’s claims on devotion.”<sup>93</sup> Here, the debates surrounding Mary are not actually about Mary but about a mother’s authority.

The Mariolatry and Immaculate Conception debates, I suggest, are also central to how early modern culture understood authorship. The prevailing patriarchal model of authorship outlined in midwife manuals and *Paradise Lost* upholds God as the supreme Author. God is the fashioner of souls and a craftsman of the human body, and his best creation is Christ, a perfect union between spirit and flesh. Yet questions remain regarding Mary’s participation in Christ’s conception and birth. Is Mary, at best, God’s amanuensis who translates God into human? Is she merely a conduit for God? Does she provide the flesh of Christ? Does she contribute any part of Christ’s soul? Also at stake in these questions are grave implications for maternal authority. As Mary Fissel’s work on female reproduction and Mary shows, the Protestant Reformation quickly became about

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<sup>91</sup> Waller, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 637-639.

<sup>93</sup> Dolan, 282.

reforming the womb, making Mary's participation or nonparticipation in Christ's conception "not a neutral or trivial topic."<sup>94</sup> This section does not intend to answer these larger theological questions but seeks to understand how early modern theories of the Immaculate Conception shape early modern narratives of patriarchal authorship.

As seen with the midwife manuals' tales of monstrous births and Milton's depiction of the Fall as a result of ungoverned female authorship, the maternal body housed a very dangerous maternal imagination that demanded constant guard. Left to its own devices, the maternal imagination distorted and deformed children. According to these tales, the maternal body would be an unsafe venue to house God's perfect child. Then why does God entrust the fallible maternal body with human salvation? What makes Mary so different from other mothers? Is it that she is inherently pure, born without sin? For some early modern believers, the answer was no. For others, Mary was sinless but only a passive vessel through which God's word enters the world. The proliferation of midwife manuals coupled with perpetual debate over the Immaculate Conception reveals a larger cultural concern about the amount of authorial agency that the maternal body could possess. Closely analyzing early modern theories of the Immaculate Conception and literary representations of Mary, I contend that Mary provides a model of embodied female authorship, which redeems the maternal body. Mary supplants the sexually fallen model of female authorship fostered by Eve and perpetuated in texts such as midwife manuals, and offers, in its place, a chaste bodily authorship.

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<sup>94</sup> Fissell, 27.

Two famed early modern stories about female heretics, a decade apart, shed further light onto the debate surrounding Mary's maternal body. On May 2, 1550, Joan Bocher, also known as Joan of Kent, was burnt at the stake for her unorthodox belief that Mary contributed nothing to Christ's formation because she had corrupt human flesh. Archbishop Thomas Cramner convicted Bocher of heresy, stating,

that you beleve that the worde was made flesshe in the virgins Belly But that Christ toke flesshe of the Virgin you beleve not because the flesshe of the Virgin being the owtwarde man was sinfully gotten, and born in Sinne. But the worde by the consent of the inwarde man of the virgin was made flesshe.<sup>95</sup>

Bocher's radical theory about the Immaculate Conception made her an early modern celebrity for Protestant martyrology.<sup>96</sup> John Foxe includes her in his *Acts and Monuments* (1563). There are reports that she was friends with fellow Protestant martyr Anne Askew (the subject of Chapter 3), whom she met at the Henrician court while supposedly smuggling banned books and Tyndale's New Testament under her skirt. Bocher even cites Askew in her defense, claiming that Cramner once recanted his beliefs on the Sacrament, for which he previously condemned and executed Askew, so that perhaps he might one day embrace Bocher's view on the Incarnation. Bocher's outspokenness and sensational public trial especially ignited response from preachers Hugh Latimer and Roger Hutchinson as well as a verse by Edmund Becke, each of whom stringently refuted Bocher's beliefs.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Quoted in Fissell, 36.

<sup>96</sup> Fissell, 37.

<sup>97</sup> Fissell, 36-37.

Bocher derived her theory of the Incarnation from an Anabaptist tenant called Christ's celestial flesh. The Anabaptists were not original in this idea, nor were they all in agreement over it. The fourteenth-century Lollards, also opposed to the Marian cult, promoted the idea of Christ's celestial flesh, and as early as the eight century, Byzantine Emperor Constantine V theorized that Mary was a mere vessel for Christ: "When she bore Christ within her womb, she was like a purse filled with gold. But after giving birth, she was no more than an empty purse."<sup>98</sup> Others referred to Mary as an empty sack devoid of precious contents: a cinnamon sack, a flour sack, and a saffron bag, the favorite metaphor among sixteenth-century radical English reformers, like the Anabaptists.<sup>99</sup> Preacher John Hooper (mentee of Protestant reformer Heinrich Bullinger) feared the Anabaptists because of "their opinions respecting the incarnation of the Lord; for they deny altogether that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary according to the flesh."<sup>100</sup> The idea that Mary was a content-less sack, useful only for holding Christ, resonates with early modern conception theories based in "ancient male fantasies about reproduction made respectable in Aristotelian biology, where a woman was considered merely as a vessel for the receptacle of male seed. If no male seed was involved in Christ's incarnation, it was logical that he did not partake of human flesh."<sup>101</sup> Theories of Christ's celestial flesh portray Mary as a passive, agent-less body who submits wholly to God's

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in MacCulloch, 187.

<sup>99</sup> MacCulloch., 187.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Fissell, 36.

<sup>101</sup> MacCulloch, 186.

will. Such theories not only stripped Mary of all authorial agency within the redemption narrative, but they also helped naturalize authorship as a masculine enterprise.

While Bocher and the Anabaptists fervently argued for Mary's passivity in Christ's conception, another early modern tale goes to the opposite extreme. A decade after Bocher's execution, a Ranter named Mary Adams reportedly invokes the Immaculate Conception to horrendous results. Mary Adams claims that she *is* the Virgin Mary pregnant with Christ, the real savior. For this claim, Adams was imprisoned. While in jail, she delivers her supposed Christ-child: a monstrous baby without a head. Adams's tale was printed in a 1652 pamphlet, along with two other tales of blasphemous debauchery, with the picture of headless child as the frontispiece. In the story, which opens and closes the pamphlet, the imprisoned Adams is helped by a

Midwife and other good women of the parish...[who] did their best endeavors to bring her a safe deliverance, but could not prevail, so that there she lay in exceeding great misery and torment for the space of 8 dayes and nights; and upon the ninth day about 7 of the clock in the forenoon, she was delivered of the most ugliest ill-shapen *Monster* that ever eyes beheld; which being dead born, they buried it with speed, for it was so loathsome to behold, that the womens hearts trembled to look upon it; for it had neither hands nor feet, but claws like a Toad in the place where the hands should have been, and every part was odious to behold (4).<sup>102</sup>

The self-appointed Virgin Mary ended her life in misery as "she rotted" away and was "consumed as she lay" by "botches, blains, boils, & stinking scabs" that covered her "from the head to the foot." Adams eventually commits suicide in a gruesome fashion, tricking the good women around her into giving her a knife "to pare her nails" and then

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<sup>102</sup> Anon., *The Ranters Monster* (London, 1652).



waiting until “the women were gone, and afterwards ript up her bowels with the same knife” (4). Context for this story reveals it to be a repeated political allegory in which a presumably royalist Adams swears that she would “rather...bring forth the Holy Ghost, to be a Round-head, or Independent, she desired that he might have no head at all.” (8). The story of a headless baby appeared about six years earlier but without the mother’s blasphemous claim to be the Virgin Mary.<sup>103</sup> Politics aside, the problem with Adams’s claims, blasphemous, yes, is that her maternal body assumes too much authority, usurping God’s authorial role in conception.

Granted, the above stories of Bocher and Adams indicate two extreme positions on Mary at two pivotal moments in early modern history--the Reformation and English Revolution--where Mary was the center of many religio-political debates. The trick was in finding a delicate balance between outright denying Mary’s role and assuming Mary’s role. Protestants needed Mary’s body for the redemption narrative to work. So, Protestant England produced “alternate Mary’s,”<sup>104</sup> particularly a Mary that is active only in so far as she serves God.

In most Protestant understandings of the Immaculate Conception, God is the ultimate author and patriarchal head while Mary becomes his humble servant, freely offering her body to God’s will. Protestant writers emphasized Mary’s virtuous nature and were careful not to treat it as extraordinary; instead, Mary was just one of many virtuous women who appropriately assumed their submissive role. William Gouge and

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<sup>103</sup> *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderful Monster* (London, 1646).

<sup>104</sup> Waller, 208.

Elizabeth Clinton, in their arguments for mothers to breastfeed their own children, both present Mary as one nursing mother among many other biblical mothers.<sup>105</sup> Here, Gouge and Clinton redirect the emphasis away from Mary's birth of Christ to caregiver of her son. Joseph Swetnam includes "that gracious and glorious Queene of all womankind, the Virgin *Mary*, the mother of al blisse" among a list of "some good" women just to glorify women's willful submission to masculine authority: "What won" Mary "her honour," was "an humble minde, and her paines and loue vnto our Sauour Christ" (47). Mary's "humble minde," if read in conversation with midwife manuals, make it clear that humility leads to natural births and not unnatural monstrosity because Mary and all mothers should not transgress the patriarchal model of masculine authorship. These writers transform Mary into one example among many of women whose main purpose is to serve others, whether that be children or husbands. Veneration is found in Mary's service to the redemption narrative and not because of any authority within it.

Thomas Bentley, writer of *The Monument of Matrones* (1582), casts Mary and the maternal body in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, the mother's womb is nothing more than a workspace for God, the creator. In a prayer for laboring women, Bentley implores God's presence. God

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<sup>105</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), writes, "The virgin *Mary* gaue sucke to Iesus. This example is to be noted especially of the meaner sort, for the virgin *Man* was young, poore, persecuted, forced to remoue and flie with her childe from countrie to countrie. Are not these excuses pretended by other mothers?" (510). Elizabeth Clinton, *The Countesse of Lincolnes nurserie* (Oxford, 1622), traces a lineage of laudable biblical female types who nursed their children (Eve, Sarah, and Hannah) before asking her readers to "take notice of one example more, that is, of the *blessed Virgin*: as her womb bore our *blessed Sauour*, so her papps gaue him sucke." Clinton summarizes her typology of nursing mothers by calling upon all mothers to concede to the examples of "euery godly matrone [that] hath walked in these steps before them" (B3).

framest the liuing enfant in the mothers wombe, and nourishest the same congealed in bloud, that the flesh within the time of ten moneths may take shape, drawing nourishment from the mother; we are all the workmanship of thine hands...Our bones are not hid from thee, though we were secretlie made, neither our substance in the inner parts of our mothers wombe. Thine eies did see our substance being unperfect, and in thy booke were all our members written.<sup>106</sup>

Of this passage, Fissell believes that Bentley shapes God as the ultimate craftsman and author in order to shift “attention away from a female womb towards a male maker as the key to the development of a fetus.”<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Bentley casts childbirth in terms of the redemption narrative: “Let them neuer striue against thee through impatience, but in true faith, and inuocation of thy name, suffer thy crosse quietlie, knowing that by the seed of the woman, which hath broken the head of the old serpent, they are reconciled unto thee. In this seed which is Christ, the curse is cleane taken awaie, and blessing restored unto us...”<sup>108</sup> Although Fissell claims that Bentley redirects attention away from Mary and to Eve, urging women to identify with Eve and the pain of the childbirth, Mary stands at the center of this depiction as well--she is the woman who leads to reconciliation, and she is the women who also endures “thy crosse” as she watches her son die on the cross.

Bentley does give authority to Mary and makes room for her as co-creator, although he may do so unintentionally. Bentley’s inclusion of Mary in *Monuments* provides early modern culture, especially female readers, with a patriarchal-approved

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<sup>106</sup> Thomas Bentley, *The fift lampe of virginitie...*, 1582, STC 1893; 131.

<sup>107</sup> Fissell, 54.

<sup>108</sup> Bentley, 130.

Mary who contains the potential for maternal authorship. Bentley's text upholds Queen Elizabeth as a paragon of "perpetual virginity" for other women to imitate ("Epistle") and includes other women worthy of "perpetual recordation" who will "incourage, prouoke, and allure all godlie women of our time...to become euen from their youth more studious imitators, and diligent folowers of so godlie and rare examples in their vertous mothers" ("A breefe catalog"). Bentley includes Mary, the blessed Virgin, among "vertous mothers" in the "first Lampe of Virginitie," subtitled "the diuine PRAIERS, HYMNES, OR SONGS, made by sundrie holie women in the Scripture." For Mary, he directs the reader to Luke 1.46, "the song of the blessed virgine Marie, the mother of our Sauour Christ, which she made at the time that she felt her self concieued of our Sauour Iesus in hir wombe."<sup>109</sup> (48). Bentley's phrasing implies Mary's creation of words at the moment of conception. Mary is not the sole author or creator of Christ, the Word, but Bentley represents her as possessing the ability to author the words of her song, "which she made" at the moment of conception.

Bentley's association of Mary with words points to a typological reading of women's relationship with language, which is further highlighted by the corner emblems on the frontispiece of *Monument of Matrones*. The top, left-hand corner contains an emblem of "GENESIS III" that depicts Eve facing to her left, kneeling below the Tree of Knowledge with her arms stretched upward toward the tree, possibly in mid-reach for the fruit. Opposite of Eve on the right-hand side is an emblem of the Annunciation, indicated by the inscribed caption "LVKE I." Mary sits facing the archangel Gabriel to her right.

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<sup>109</sup> Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones* ..., 1582, STC 1892, 48.

The printer has positioned Eve and Mary as polar opposites to emphasize their antithetical roles as mother of humankind's corruption and mother as humankind's redemption, respectively. Moreover, Eve and Mary's positioning, I propose, highlights each mother's relationship with the Word. On the one hand, Eve, as she reaches for the fruit of the tree, rejects God's word, and adhered to Satan's word; Mary, on the other hand, receives Gabriel's message of her conception of Christ, symbolizing her acceptance of God's word through the form of Christ, the Word incarnate. Mary's is *rightly* positioned with God's word. This emblem of the Annunciation further emphasizes Bentley's brief commentary on Mary's creation of a song at the moment of conception in Luke 1.46. As a result of Eve's rejection and Mary's acceptance of God's word, women have a relationship with fallen and redeemed language, respectively.

Similar to Bentley, Rachel Speght and Aemelia Lanyer articulate women's relationship with words and the Word in the Fall and Redemption narratives as an embodied process. In *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617), Speght admits that Eve is at fault for the Fall, but so is Adam because he fails to assert his authority:

Women sinned, it is true, by her infidelitie in not beleeving the Word of God, but giving credite to Sathans fair promises, that *shee should not die*; but so did the man too: And if *Adam* had not approoved of that deed which *Eve* had done, and beene willing to treade the steps which she had gone, hee being her Head would have reproved her, and have made the commandement a bit to restraine him from breaking his Makers Injunction (14).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Rachel Speght, *A Mouzell for Melastomus* in *The Polemics and Poems of Rachel Speght*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 1-27.

Speght plays the gender hierarchy to women's advantage, claiming innate inferiority in order to place blame onto Adam and his lack of authority. He fails to reinforce God's "commandement" and transgresses "his Makers Injunction." The hierarchy of authorship, God giving commandments and Adam embodying, internalizing them has failed. Adam has not taken his proper place as Eve's head.

While Adam fails to assume his proper place in the gendered hierarchy of authority by willfully neglecting God's word, women embody the holy word, keeping it in their hearts. Speght privileges woman's relationship with words, identifying one of woman's excellencies as "her voice." She outlines biblical female types who used their language to either "sound forth [man's] prayes" or "to give good counsell unto her husband" such as Sarah, Pilate's wife, and Leah and Rachel (19). Moreover, Speght suggests that a woman's "heart should be a receptacle for Gods Word, like Mary that treasured up the sayings of CHRIST in her heart" (20). Speght locates the intangible word of God in the material, female body of Mary and of all women, implicitly casting them as authors who can spread Christ's words and produces the narrative of salvation. Speght herself models this redemptive authorship in her own writing. Male writers who defame women have a "corrupt Heart and railing Tongue" which makes them "a fit scribe for the Divell" (7).

Aemelia Lanyer's portraits of Eve and Mary in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611) also reveal an embodied female authorship rooted in Mary and women's positive

words.<sup>111</sup> Lanyer, like Speght, assumes Eve's mental inferiority and innate innocence in order to lay fault with Adam. For Lanyer, Eve only wanted to share with "Adam what shee held most deare" (line 764);<sup>112</sup> furthermore, Eve had an "undiscerning Ignorance" that makes her unable to recognize Satan's "plot" (768): "But she (poore soule) by cunning was deceav'd, / No hurt therein her harmelesse Heart intended: / For she alleag'd Gods word, which he denies" (773-775). In these lines, Lanyer (through the voice of Pilate's wife) explains that Eve is actually compliant with authority, "alleging," or citing God's injunction while Adam just eats without considering God's commandment. Lanyer more forcefully writes that Adam cannot be pardoned because "Gods holy word ought all his actions frame," since he was made first (782). Again, Eve might be at fault for her disobedience to God's word, but Adam is more so for not asserting his authority.

After discussing the Fall, Lanyer recounts the Redemption narrative, beginning with the Annunciation and emphasizes woman's redeemed relationship to words and the Word. The word "words" appears at three distinct moments. The first two instances appear when Gabriel addresses Mary ("what endlesse comfort did these words afford" [line 1044]) and delivers his message ("When thy pure thoughts could hardly apprehend / This salutation... / Nor couldst thou judge, whereto those words did tend" [1058-1060]). The third mention of "words" comes during Lanyer's further meditation on Gabriel's message. God sends "His faithfull servant *Gabriel* to deliver / To thy chaste eares no

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<sup>111</sup> For scholarship on Lanyer's treatment of Mary see Gary Kuchar, "Aemilia Lanyer and the Virgin's Swoon: Theology and Iconography in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *English Literary Renaissance* 37.1 (2007), 47-73; and Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005), 115-144.

<sup>112</sup> Aemilia Lanyer, *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, ed. Susanne Woods (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP), 1993.

word that might offend” (1068-1070). Lanyer’s third use of “word” draws attention to woman’s material connection to words in that it is her “chaste eares” that receive and listen to words. Such a portrayal juxtaposes Milton’s later description of Eve’s loose ears, through which Satan metaphorically “impregn[s]” Eve because he “too easy entrance won.” Further calling attention to how words play into Eve / Mary typology, Lanyer exclaims to Mary that, God, “Making thee Servant, Mother, Wife, and Nurse / To Heavens bright King, that freed us from the curse” (1087-1088). Although Lanyer clearly cites Christ, not Mary, as redeemer, her rhyme of “Nurse” with “curse” resonates with the fact that it is Mary, the nurse of Christ, who also redeems “us” women from Eve’s “curse,” guaranteeing women a blessing through childbirth. Finally, as Lanyer continues to praise Mary, she writes,

Thus beeing crown’d with glory from above,  
 Grace and Perfection resting in thy breast,  
 Thy humble answer doth approve thy Love,  
 And all these sayings in thy heart doe rest:  
 Thy Child a Lambe, and thou a Turtle dove,  
 Above all other women highly blest; (1089-1094)

Lanyer recognizes Mary as a vessel of “sayings” that in her “heart doe rest,” making Mary “highly blest,” which Lanyer emphasizes by the rhyme of breast / rest / blest.

More specifically, Speght and Lanyer demonstrate that women writers often found strength in the figure of Mary, who corrects woman’s fallen association with the Word. Mary sanctifies the maternal body as an avenue unto female authorship. Femke Molekamp suggests that in *Salve Deus Rex Judearoum*, Lanyer fashions Christ as a book and aligns “her work with Scripture,” yet Molekamp never states the underlying



implication: if Christ is a book to be read, then Mary has some role as author.<sup>113</sup> Other scholars, like Jennifer Summit, more explicitly claim Mary as an author figure for women writers.<sup>114</sup> The Fall and Redemption are narratives particularly useful for demonstrating women's roles as authors. Women writers turned to Eden again and again in order to revise and complicate Eve's and Adam's participation in original sin. Wrestling with this well-worn story, women writers could oppose misogynist accusations of women's innate spiritual, mental, and physical inferiority while also highlighting their role in humankind's salvation as a way to argue for women's spiritual equality. If conventional readings of Eve's sin position women's maternal bodies as deviant and devious, not to be trusted with words, then for women writers to revisit the Fall narrative allows them to redeem themselves as authors and to rewrite their relationship with words and the Word by invoking Mary's role as the mother of Christ, the Word Incarnate.

### **Blessed Words: Mary as Author in Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing***

More so than Speght or Lanyer, Dorothy Leigh stresses the blessing of female authorship that Mary bestows upon women through a chaste body.<sup>115</sup> Scholars have often

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<sup>113</sup> Femke Molekamp, "Reading Christ the Book in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611): Iconography and the Cultures of Reading," *Studies in Philology* 109.3 (2012): 311-332; 331. Other studies on Lanyer's portrayal of Mary and Lanyer's theological beliefs include Gary Kuchar, "Aemilia Lanyer and the Virgin's Swoon: Theology and Iconography in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *English Literary Renaissance* 37.1 (2007): 47-73; and Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate 2005), 115-144; esp. 126-127.

<sup>114</sup> Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 2000), 124. Although not writing about women writers, Dayton Haskin believes that Milton in *Paradise Regained* portrays Mary as an "artist" who "exercises the authorly roles of preserving, interpreting, and combining diverse texts into a unique personal synthesis" and "anticipates the activity of other bearers of the Word...like Luke and latter-day poets like Milton himself" (180). Dayton Haskin, "Milton's Portrait of Mary as Bearer of the Word," *Milton and the Idea of Woman*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988), 169-84.

<sup>115</sup> Leigh, in general, has become a source of much scholarship. Kristen Poole's seminal essay, "'The Fittest Closet for all Goodness': Authorial Strategies of Jacobean Mothers' Manuals," *Studies in English*

cited Leigh's main authorial strategy as her "maternal body,"<sup>116</sup> and label her a "writing mother," "mother author," or "author mother." Some scholars more specifically name Mary as Leigh's primary authorial model, proposing that Leigh equates the act of writing and publishing a book for her children with Mary's physical birth of Christ, a redemptive action that enables Leigh to write.<sup>117</sup> Using the established scholarly model of Leigh as a "mother author," I argue that Leigh shapes Mary as the redeemer of female authorship. More than just invoking Mary as an authorial figure, Leigh appropriates Mary's maternal

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*Literature* 35 (1995): 69-88, has certainly established the foundation for investigating Leigh's and Elizabeth Jocelin's authorizing strategies as they carefully negotiated and manipulated the boundary between public and private spheres. For other scholars who discuss Leigh in relation to legitimization strategies and her role as female author, see Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, 247-285; Sylvia Brown, "'Over Her Dead Body': Feminism, Poststructuralism, and the Mother's Legacy," *Discontinuities: New Essays on Renaissance Literature and Criticism*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Paul Stevens (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998), 3-26; Martha Craig, "Write It upon the Walles of Your Houses': Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing*," *Women's Life-Writing: Finding Voice/Building Community*, ed. Linda S. Coleman (Bowling Green, OH: Popular, 1997), 191-208; Loyd Davis, "Redemptive Advice: Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing*," *Women Writing, 1550-1750*, ed. Jo Wallock and Paul Salzman (Bundoora, Australia: Meridian, 2001), 59-71; Ulricke Tancke "(M)others and Selves: Identify Formation and/in Relationship in Early Modern Women's Self-Writings," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 10.3 (2005); Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 279-340; and Valerie Wayne, "Advice for Women from Mothers and Patriarchs," *Women and Literature in Britain 1550-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 56-79. Studies such as Michelle M. Dowd, "Household Pedagogies: Female Educators and the Language of Legacy," *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 133-172; Catherine Gray, "Feeding on the Seed of the Woman: Dorothy Leigh and the Figure of Maternal Dissent" *ELH* 68.3 (2001): 563-92; and Edith Snook, "Dorothy Leigh, the 'Labourous Bee,' and the Work of Literacy in Seventeenth-Century England," *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005), 57-82, and "Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing* and the Political Maternal Voice in Seventeenth-Century England," *The Literary Mother: Essays on Representations of Maternity and Child Care*, ed. Susan C. Staub (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 161-184; ask us to consider Leigh's larger social and/or political contexts, such as education and religio-political debates.

For studies on mother's advice books, see Jennifer Heller, *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 74; Betty Travitsky, "The New Mother of the English Renaissance: Her Writings on Motherhood," *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980), 33-43; and Marsha Urban, *Seventeenth-Century Mother's Advice Books* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>116</sup> Brown, 20.

<sup>117</sup> See Beilin and Wayne.

body to develop a chaste relationship with words that permits Leigh to bestow names and a mother's blessing upon unborn progeny and future readers, two acts that resonate with the material production of her text.

In chapter 9 of *The Mother's Blessing* Leigh establishes Mary as the ultimate chaste woman that all women, especially mothers, should imitate. Chapter 9 discusses the importance of aptly naming children, so the topic of chastity seems like a "peppery digression."<sup>118</sup> While some have accused Leigh of patriarchal leanings because of her fixation on chastity,<sup>119</sup> others find Leigh's defense of and insistence upon chastity to be an authorial strategy.<sup>120</sup> For Beilin, Leigh casts chastity as "essentially feminine, while yet authorizing a public role for women...Leigh redefines chastity to suit the goals of women rather than of men."<sup>121</sup> Here, I am not concerned with the private/public binary, but Beilin's gesture towards chastity as an innate authorizing concept is helpful for understanding the maternal body and female authorship as sanctified, which supplants the fallen female authorship that Eve and the maternal imagination signify. Leigh's insistence that women embrace chastity, then, is not a patriarchal confinement of women that ensures paternal lineage (as in midwife manuals) but a reappropriation of a traditionally patriarchal concept that enables Leigh to cast the maternal body as a trustworthy author

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<sup>118</sup> Christine W. Sizemore, "Early Seventeenth-Century Advice Books: The Female Viewpoint" *South Atlantic Bulletin* 41.1 (1976), 41-48; 44.

<sup>119</sup> Urban, 48; Wayne, 67

<sup>120</sup> Davis, 68.

<sup>121</sup> Beilin, 278.

who can properly bestow names and blessings upon children that are materialized into a physical text.

Mary's chaste relationship with words begins with her redeeming women from Eve's original sin. Leigh evokes the metaphor of conception to show Eve's fault. "The vnchaste woman is proud, and always decking her selfe with vanity, and delights to heare the vaine words of men," writes Leigh (27).<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, "The vaine words of the man, and the idle cares of the woman, beget vnchaste thoughts oftentimes in the one, which may bring forth much wickednesse in them both" (28). The "vain words of men," as Jennifer Heller remarks, "can deceive women...just as Satan beguiled Eve."<sup>123</sup> Like Milton's Satan "impregn[s]" Eve's ear that "too easy entrance won" with his specious speech (9.737; 732), Leigh's unchaste women welcome, entertain, and allow men's vain words to penetrate their ears, a symbolic pregnancy that leads "many women to much sorrow, "vexation," and "wickednesse" (27, 28). Unchaste women and vain men perpetually reenact the Fall.

Eve, as Leigh points out, is not the only model for women to imitate. For Leigh, women can mimic Mary and actively participate in the redemption narrative through the figurative labor of authorship. Leigh develops Mary as the best namesake for women because of her innate association with chastity, redemption, and sanctified authorship. In Mary, women can see, "what a blessing God hath sent to vs women through that gracious Virgin, by whom it pleased GOD to take away the shame, which EVE our Grandmother

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<sup>122</sup> Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing*, 1616, in *Women's Writing in Stuart England*, ed. Sylvia Brown (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1999). 1-87.

<sup>123</sup> Heller, 74.

had brought vs to” (28). Mary’s role in redeeming humankind makes her “blessed” because she rescues the female sex and births “a Sauour, the fruit of obedience, that whosoeuer feedeth of, shall liue for euer” (28). Here, Leigh clearly addresses Mary’s role as the mother of humankind’s redeemer via the female body; however, her repetition of the word “blessing” and “blessed” as related to Mary’s physical role as mother of Christ also implies that women’s redemption is dependent upon words, which unexpectedly involves the virtue of chastity. That is, Mary is blessed because of her status as Christ’s mother and because she is a paragon of chastity. Leigh essentially uses Mary to link the words of the blessing to chastity. The chaste maternal body produces the Word of salvation--the ultimate blessing. Mothers, then, should take up Mary’s example.

First, Mary’s typological relationship with words enables Leigh to suggest names for her progeny for generations to come, an act that frequently remained within the domain of men.<sup>124</sup> In the midst of praising Mary for her status as a blessed, chaste woman that other women should imitate, Leigh gives other possible female biblical names for women. Interestingly, either Leigh or the printer (or in collaboration with each other) enters the catalogue of biblical names in the middle of the page and arranges them in an acrostic that spells Maria, a variant spelling on Mary:

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<sup>124</sup> Adam, not Eve, names the newly created animals and plants (Genesis 2:19-20). Kristen Poole, though specifically an essay on Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, discusses how gendered language results from depictions of pre- and postlapsarian language. Poole, along with John Leonard, addresses Milton’s depiction of Eve’s naming of the plants. Whereas Leonard believes Eve’s act of naming not on “an equal status with Adam’s” (47), Poole argues that Eve is “a generative linguistic source. She becomes a *lingua matrica* that serves as a counterpart to the *lingua adamica*.” Moreover, Poole locates in Eve a transcendental association with words, where “a mystical relationship to words and to the Word is a state of being, not a mode of visual action” (557). John Leonard, *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); and Kristen Poole, “‘The Fittest Closet for all Goodness’: Authorial Strategies of Jacobean Mothers’ Manuals” *Studies in English Literature* 35 (1995), 69-88.

*Michal*  
*Abigail*  
*Rachel*  
*Iudith*  
*Anna*

The beauty of this acrostic is the nuanced manipulation of early modern printing practices that commonly substituted J with I (Iudith for Judith) and an acute attention to variant spellings of names (Anna for Hannah) (29).

All of the women, except for Rachel, are in biblical stories that praise them for their use of words. Michal, uses her words to save David; Leigh cites 1 Samuel 19:12 as her biblical source where Michal physically helps David escape Saul's wrath by lowering him out of a window, but the story's preceding verse informs readers that Michal first "tolde" David of Saul's plan to murder him--her words and action lead David, a type for Christ, to safety (1 Sam. 19:11).<sup>125</sup> Next, Leigh lists Abigail because she "is highly commended for her wisdom," which manifests itself through words (30).

Leigh intriguingly selects Judith as her fourth biblical namesake. Judith allows Leigh/the printer to make a perfect acrostic since the "J" transforms to an "I" but also provides Leigh with a woman who authors her nation's salvation through her words and bodily seduction. The commentary in the Geneva Bible prefacing the chapter of the Book of Judith notes that Judith "*deceiuth him [Holofernes] by her faire wordes*" (p. 413). Judith promises to guide Jerusalem's enemy Holofernes safely through Jerusalem in order so that he can establish his throne. "Then her wordes pleased Olofernes, and all his

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<sup>125</sup> All citations come from the Geneva Bible, except where noted otherwise. *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*. Madison, Milwaukee, and London: U of Wisconsin P, 1969.

servants,” the book states (21:20). Holofernes’s servants say to her, “There is not suche a woman in all the worlde, bothe for beautie of face, and wisdome of wordes,” and Holofernes exclaims that Judith is “wittie in [her] wordes” (21:21;22). Thus, while Judith kills Holofernes by decapitation, it is her use of words that lead to Judith’s famous murder.

Concluding Leigh’s acrostic is Anna/Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who Leigh claims is “zealous” in prayer, glossing this sentence with 1 Samuel 1.10-11 (30). In these two verses, a “troubled,” barren Hanna “vowed a vowe” to God that if he would “loke on the trouble of thine handmayd” and let her conceive a child, she would dedicate the child to him. The emphasis on vows immediately draws attention to how a woman uses words; these are words promised to God. Also, Hannah’s reference to herself as “thine handmayd” anticipates Mary’s song in Luke 1 post-Annunciation, when Mary thanks God for acknowledging “his seruant,” as Geneva records it, or “his handmaiden,” as written in the 1611 King James Authorized Version (Luke 1:48). Each of these biblical namesakes reflect women’s salvific relationship with words that brings about an ultimate good for others (rescue for David, salvation of a nation, and birth of children) instead of women’s fallen language as inherited from Eve. More importantly, for Leigh, all these names refer back to Mary and Mary to them:

Seeing then, that by this one name, so many vertues are called to remembrance, I think it meete, that good names bee giuen to all women, that they might call to minde the vertues of those women whose names they beare: but especially aboue all other moral Vertues, let women be perswaded by this discourse, to imbrace chastity, without which we are meere beasts, and no women (30).

Names ensure chastity, but chastity also ensures a correct relationship with words that authorizes one to name. Chastity grounds authorship.

Mary's chastity and "blessed" status as mother of the Word, Christ incarnate, provides women with an author figure to imitate but more specifically authorizes Leigh's textual production of *The Mother's Blessing*. Leigh emphasizes the maternal body, as rooted in Mary, as essential to the writing process. The mother's advice manual, the genre to which Leigh's text belongs, literalizes the labor metaphor that male poets, like Sidney, and the male writers of midwife manuals exploit. Leigh also elevates the laboring, pregnant mother trope to the spiritual realm. In Chapter 2, Leigh defends the act of writing, "a thing so vnusuall among" mothers, by boldly declaring "neither care I what you or any shall thinke of mee, if among many words I may write but one sentence, which may make you labour for the spirituall food of the soule" (22). Leigh embodies the mothering trope in multiple ways: through her own birth of children to whom she dedicates *The Mother's Blessing*; by writing her advice manual; and by continuing her spiritual edification of children and future generations via her text.

In *The Mother's Blessing*, the maternal body intertwines physical and spiritual labor because the maternal body is how a mother authors salvation in her children. Mothers, Leigh writes, can never forget their pregnancies and child labor: "will she not labour now till Christ be formed in it? will shee not blesse it euery time it suckes on her breasts, when shee feeleth the bloud come from her heart to nourish it?...And can any man blame a mother (who indeed brought forth her childe with much paine) though she labour againe till Christ bee formed in them?" (23). She demands that no one blame her for



writing since it is her second labor. She hopes that her writing will be a “good example” for her sons who should also “write and speake the Word of God” and even “remember to write a booke vnto [their] wn children” (24). Much like the laboring maternal body, Leigh’s text is regenerative--it implants salvation into her children, who will continue the process for the next generation.

Unbeknownst to Leigh, her text does continue to proliferate salvation. Leigh died in 1616, the same year of her text’s publication, which sparked a renewed interest in the genre of mother’s legacies, or mothers’ advice manuals.<sup>126</sup> Sylvia Brown casts Leigh as a “good candidate” for “the ‘mother’ of the genre.”<sup>127</sup> Other mother’s legacies included Elizabeth Grymeston’s *Mescelanea, Meditations, and Memoratiues* (1604); Elizabeth Josceline’s *The Mothers Legacie to her Unborn Child* (1622); M.R.’s *The Mothers Counsell, Or, Live Withing Compasse* (1624, 1630); Elizabeth Richardson’s *The Ladies Legacy* (1645); and Susanna Bell’s *The Legacy of a Dying Mother to her Mourning Children* (1673). Each ran through a significant amount of reprints. Leigh’s text alone saw twenty-three editions between the years 1616 and 1674 and seven in the first five years of its publication.

Leigh’s popularity extended into future centuries and generations, as well. At least two editions of *The Mother’s Blessing* held at the Folger Shakespeare Library reveal that women continued to distribute this book to their kin and own their own copy of it. In a 1634 edition, an inscription shows that one William Millard owned the book in 1705

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<sup>126</sup> Nicholas Breton wrote *The Mothers Blessing* in 1602 (not to be confused with Leigh’s text). See Kristen Poole, “‘The fittest closet.’”

<sup>127</sup> Brown, 3.

and his great-great-great maternal nephew eventually obtained it.<sup>128</sup> Perhaps more intriguing is the 1640 printed edition at the Folger. On verso of the title page is a poem:

Elizabeth Bewe is my name  
and with my pen I wrote  
the same  
an if my pen had been better  
I had write every letter.<sup>129</sup>

That a woman inscribes her own poem into her copy of *The Mother's Blessing* testifies, although unintentionally, the regenerative power of female authorship as rooted in the maternal body, specifically Mary's. Women can give birth to words, just as Mary gives birth to Christ, the Word. By invoking the chaste maternal body of Mary and her model of redeemed authorship, Leigh carves out a space for herself as author that enables Leigh to write an advice manual, promote it, and encourage others to continue in her labor.

In addition to Mary's chaste nature, her epithet as "blessed" legitimizes Leigh's penned blessing to her sons and other readers. Leigh adapts Mary's blessed status into the ability *to bless*, transitioning from a passive object that is blessed into an agent who can bless. Female authorship rooted in the maternal body, as we have seen, is about the

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<sup>128</sup> STC 15407.2. "inscription on slip pasted to front fly-leaf" reads 'William Millard [?] His Booke 1705 Great-Great-Great Uncle, [maternal] of Christopher Trip George," See Folger record [http://shakespeare.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=10&ti=1,10&Search\\_Arg=Leigh%2C%20Dorothy%2E&Search\\_Code=TKEY%2B&CNT=50&REC=0&RD=0&RC=0&PID=ITvfp1c43UJwDLWfvxS5Z5bPNCF6k&SEQ=20140801133312&SID=5](http://shakespeare.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=10&ti=1,10&Search_Arg=Leigh%2C%20Dorothy%2E&Search_Code=TKEY%2B&CNT=50&REC=0&RD=0&RC=0&PID=ITvfp1c43UJwDLWfvxS5Z5bPNCF6k&SEQ=20140801133312&SID=5)

<sup>129</sup> STC 15408. The edition also contains "another ditty by Elizabeth Bewe" on A6r and various other inscriptions and markings from other hands. Also interesting is this particular edition was printed by Thomas Cotes, a printer of at least over 250 works (according to a Folger Hamnet search), only one of which is by a woman--Dorothy Leigh. Cotes also printed Ambrose Paré's *The workes of the famous chirurghion Ambrose Parey translated out of Latine and compared with the French*, which was one medical treatise explaining monstrosity and giving illustrations of monstrous children (See STC 19189).

ability to create--agency and authority. Leigh uses her text to participate in the historically patriarchal act of blessing, a symbolic gesture of a father's authority passed on to male heirs to ensure primogeniture and an enduring patrilineage. When William Gouge speaks of parents' "last blessing" and "last speech" to their children," he writes to the masculine gender--"If euer therefore there by a time seasonable for a parent to giue good instructions to his children, then is the time when parents are cleane departing from their children"--and lists Isaac, Jacob, and David as exemplary fathers who others should "note in pattern" (568; 569). Leigh plays along. From the outset, she presents her text as an extension of the dead father's will and her own deathbed manuscript, both of which permit her to write (17).<sup>130</sup> She aptly performs the good wife and mother. Yet by calling her text *The Mothers Blessing*, Leigh places the final words of the parent with the mother, thereby giving women authority to bless.

The materialized blessing as a symbol of motherly love and wifely duty also influences Leigh's discussion of the necessity of her sons selecting appropriate spouses. Leigh cites the Genesis matriarch Rebecca as an inimitable wife and mother. She records Rebecca's last words, "*I shall be weary of my life, if Iacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth,*" which she interprets, "as if she should say, If my Sonne marry an vngodly wife, then all my comfort of him and his is gone" (31). Leigh's lauding of Rebecca as a paradigm of loving motherhood seems innocent enough. However, Leigh elides the action for which Rebecca is infamously known: subterfuge of her husband's authority. In

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<sup>130</sup> Wendy Wall elaborates on the deathbed as an authorial strategy for women writers. As women enter death, their wills are ways to enter authorship. *Imprint of Gender*, (Cornell UP, 1993); and "Isabella Whitney and the Female Legacy," *ELH* 58.1 (1991): 35-62.

the Genesis tale, Rebecca uses God's will to sanction her deception of Isaac, her husband. While pregnant with warring twins, Esau and Jacob, Rebecca learns from God that the younger Jacob will eventually rule over Esau. Rebecca hurries along the process, acting upon God's promise. Isaac, who is blind and old, understands that death is soon approaching and wants to give his blessing to Esau, his favorite and elder son. He instructs Esau to hunt and make a stew with the killed game and then Isaac promises the blessing. Before Esau can return from his hunt, Jacob steals the blessing with the help of his mother. Rebecca advises Jacob to dress up like Esau and obtain Isaac's blessing. Afterwards, Esau seeks revenge and plots to murder Jacob; therefore, Rebecca requests that Isaac send Jacob to another land to select a wife. The story has little to do with Rebecca's concern about spouses and a lot to do with her sanctioned usurpation of her husband's authority. Leigh's mention of Rebecca alludes to the larger issue at hand: the father's blessing. Like Rebecca, Leigh wrangles the father's blessing from her husband, through her insistence that she is faithfully "fulfilling" her husband's will, and transforms it into *The Mother's Blessing* (17).

Leigh's manipulation of the blessing sheds light on the closing sentence of Leigh's text: "And the blessing of God Almightye, the Father, the Sonne, and the holy Ghost be with you all from this time, euen to the worlds end. Amen" (76). At first glance, Leigh seems to reposition the "blessing" in the patriarchal realm of the father and son, circling back to her original cause for writing, which was to give the father's will or blessing to his sons. However, although she ends with the father's blessing, the reader will inevitably be reminded of the text he or she is holding, *The Mother's Blessing*. In

other words, Leigh has created a text in which words, or the blessing, are simultaneously patriarchal and matriarchal. A reader cannot read the word “blessing” without thinking about a mother’s blessing alongside a father’s blessing. This ending also resonates with the proverb donning the title page: “My sonne, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the lawe of thy mother” (Proverbs 1.8). The proverb mingles the patriarchal with the matriarchal as the conjunction “and” indicating an equal power in words. Yet, the difference between a father’s “instruction” and a mother’s “lawe” troubles that equal relationship, especially considering that biblically speaking it is God’s commands or laws that are not supposed to be transgressed. Eve, remember, “forsakes” God’s word and law, thereby creating women’s fallen relationship with words that Mary redeems. Words, then, are what Mary restores to mothers, bestowing upon women a blessed, chaste, and redeemed authorship. Leigh, though nodding to patriarchy, offers a corrective to the demonic maternal body of the midwife manuals, and shifts authorship from a purely patriarchal model. The laboring maternal body (in childbirth and writing) opens up authorship as women’s natural domain as well as men’s.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **EMBODIED PROTESTANT AUTHORSHIP**

While in the later sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century Protestant England struggled with how to reform women's authorial agency via maternal bodies, the mid-1500s were embroiled, more generally, in a debate over which religion, Protestantism or Catholicism, was the true one. Typically we understand the major religious shifts between Catholicism and Protestantism to be at their height in England when each of Henry VIII's heirs ascended the throne: from Henry VIII to Protestant Edward to Catholic Mary and then to Protestant Elizabeth. But the very beginnings of the Reformation under Henry VIII (1534-1547) were tricky times. In 1534, Henry officially ushered in the English Reformation with the Act of Supremacy and the Dissolution of the Monasteries, two acts heavily supported by fervent Protestants, such as Thomas Cromwell, Hugh Latimer, and John Firth, but by 1539, Henry had reinforced Roman Catholic doctrine with the Statute of the Six Articles. He remained head of the Church of England but sought to consolidate religious authority, so the Six Articles made transubstantiation doctrinal law in England. Subsequent laws stopped the spread of Reformation tracts and doctrine. Henry had broken from Rome and had been excommunicated, but much of the Roman Catholic faith still reigned in England, making it a dangerous country for early Reformers.

One of the earliest champions of the English Reformation was the reformed Carmelite friar, John Bale, a historian, bibliophile, dramatist, and writer of hagiography, who dedicated his life to fashioning England as a Protestant nation. Bale believed England was in the throes of the end times, as turbulent political wars raged between Protestantism and Catholicism. Throughout his writings, Bale intended to “shape the myth of the ‘beleaguered isle,’ that epic view of the nation’s past in which England had striven heroically...to keep out Roman spiritual corruption.”<sup>131</sup> Bale’s loyalty to the Protestant cause not only resulted in his exile, but also his placement on a list of banned authors by Henry VIII (July 8, 1546). Despite all of his writings, Bale has become known most for his publication of *The first examinacyon of Anne Askew* in November, 1546, and *The lattre examinacyon of Anne Askew* on January 16, 1547, the latter being published about a week before Henry VIII’s death on January 28.<sup>132</sup> In both first editions of Askew’s *Examinations*, Bale includes a woodcut frontispiece depicting a female Protestant martyr triumphing over Catholicism; a preface entitled “Johan Bale to the Christen Reader;” Askew’s examinations, which Bale promises are “her owne hande writynge” (7); and Bale’s commentary on said examinations.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Leslie P. Fairfield, *John Bale: Mythmaker for the English Reformation* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue UP, 1976), 94.

<sup>132</sup> The original spelling of the text is maintained here, but throughout I will consider the two texts together, referring to both as the *Examinations*, except where noted otherwise. All citations are taken from Elaine V. Beilin’s scholarly edition, Anne Askew, *The Examinations of Anne Askew* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996).

<sup>133</sup> Also included at the end of *The first examinacyon* is Askew’s verse meditation on Psalm 54. For a reading of Askew’s poem see Joan Pong Linton, “The Plural Voices of Anne Askew” in *Write or be Written: Early Modern Women Poets and Cultural Constraints*, ed. Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt. (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), 137-153.

A contemporary of Bale, Askew was considered a heretic for violating Henry VIII's Statute of the Six Articles (1539), especially its reinforcement of Roman Catholic ideology, such as transubstantiation, which Askew adamantly denied. In fact, questions of transubstantiation and how to understand the Eucharist run throughout *Examinations*. Askew was imprisoned, interrogated, tortured, and burnt at the stake in Smithfield on July 16, 1546. Bale published the first examination a few months after Askew's execution. Although fellow heretics, John Lassells, John Hemley, and John Hadlam, were executed alongside Askew, they were not immortalized as Askew was to be. For Bale, Askew became the embodiment of Protestant martyrdom and an enduring symbol of the Reformation. Bale's editions of the *Examinations* in 1546 and 1547 made Anne Askew an early modern bestseller. The *Examinations* were frequently reprinted throughout the sixteenth-century (though typically without Bale's commentary) and found a revival with John Foxe's inclusion of Askew's story in *Acts and Monuments* (1563).<sup>134</sup> Throughout the early modern period, Askew became an important figure in the Protestant tradition. The political, religious, and textual history of the *Examinations* reveals a codependent authorial relationship between John Bale and Anne Askew. Bale achieves popularity with the publication of Askew's *Examinations* while Askew owes her posthumous popularity to Bale. However, scholarship repeatedly separates Bale from Askew, placing them in antagonistic roles. Bale has largely become an infamous boogeyman among scholars of

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<sup>134</sup> For a complete textual history of Askew's *Examinations*, see Beilin's introduction, xlv-liv. *The first examinacyon* was reprinted in 1585 by Robert Waldegrave without Bale's commentary. The two examinations together were reprinted by Nicholas Hill in 1547 with Bale's commentary; in 1548 by William hill without Bale's commentary; around 1550 by William Copland without Bale's commentary; and around 1560 without Bale's commentary.



early modern women's writing, who believe him to be a misogynistic propagandist undermining Askew's writing for the cause of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>135</sup> In this critical narrative, Askew is interrogated and tortured by Henry VIII's officials *and* suffers misrepresentation at the hand of Bale who makes his own claims of authorship over Askew's dead body.

This chapter, however, seeks to understand another relationship between Askew and Bale. Using the Christian rhetoric of the church being the body of Christ, I propose a model of collaborative authorship that situates Bale and Askew as interdependent members of Christ's body. Within this model, Bale develops an embodied female authorship by shaping Askew's text and female martyred body into Reformed discourse. Bale, more specifically, ties the martyred female body of Askew to the material production and transmission of Protestantism. Askew also has authorial agency within this collaborative model, for it is her text and her body that allows Bale's work to be done. Just as Christ sacrifices his body, Askew willfully offers up her body for the Reformation; Bale, like the early recorders of the primitive Christian church, ensures the correct transmission of Askew's tale and God's Word. Bale and Askew co-author the English Reformation.

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<sup>135</sup> Elaine V. Beilin, "A Challenge to Authority: Anne Askew" in *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987), 29-47; Thomas Betteridge, "Anne Askewe, John Bale, and Protestant History," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27.2 (1997): 265-84; and Kimberly Anne Coles, "The Death of the Author (and the appropriation of her text): the case of Anne Askew's *Examinations*" in *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008).

### Reforming Female Authorship

Bale and Askew's authorial collaboration of a Protestant England challenges traditional constructions of feminist literary scholarship that imply an "essentially combative" relationship between male writers and women writers, and it also challenges, as Pender notes, "a theoretical investment in the early modern women writer's authorial autonomy."<sup>136</sup> In other words, if we consider Bale to be a helpful contributor of the *Examinations* in its entirety, then we cannot claim Askew as a 'pure' female author. The larger question at stake for discussing Bale and Askew's relationship is "Who is the real author of the text?" Is Bale the author since he edits, elucidates, and publishes Askew's examinations, or is Askew the sole author whose text has fallen into the hands of a malevolent male editor? Feminist scholars have long assumed John Bale to be the embodiment of a masculinist literary history that attempts to constrain female authors for patriarchy's gain. For the most part, feminist literary tradition has trained scholars of women's writing to be suspicious of men's intentions toward women. This is certainly the case with Bale and Askew. Bale is not to be trusted because, as the story goes, he denies Askew authorial agency. Furthermore, the worry that Bale will mishandle Askew's story is that he will mishandle her body. Unstated in Askew scholarship is an implied equation between Askew's text and her body. So Askew becomes a martyr of feminist literary history; her body-text crucified and violated by the inherently misogynistic Bale. The real villain in the *Examinations* is not the court interrogators who place Askew upon the rack and break her body, but Bale who has racked her text for his

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<sup>136</sup> Patricia Pender, "Reading Bale Reading Anne Askew: Contested Collaboration in the *Examinations*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73.3 (2010): 507-522; 520.

own purposes. For Theresa Kemp, Bale “insert[s] his own overwhelming intertextual commentary” in order to shape Askew how he wants.<sup>137</sup> Paula McQuade writes that Bale displays a “heavy-handedness” in writing Askew “as a generic Christian saint” for the new genre of Protestant hagiography.<sup>138</sup> Finally, Thomas Betteridge notes that “[i]n glossing Askewe’s words Bale implies that they need such treatment because they only have meaning within the terms of his own self-understanding and that of the struggles in which he was involved.”<sup>139</sup> Askew’s text is a voice crying out from Bale’s editorial prison.

The job of literary historians, then, is to liberate Askew’s text and her body, from baleful hands. In the words of McQuade, Askew “forcefully counters” Bale and “succeed[s] in styling herself as a Protestant, female subject.”<sup>140</sup> Scholars insist that Askew’s authentic text could be found if one just parse Askew’s text from Bale’s commentary and paratexts: “to examine Askew’s text without Bale’s framework is to find Askew’s depiction of herself a much less easy assimilation of the ‘weak vessel of the Lord’ with the learned, argumentative, courageous woman who defied the male hierarchy of both Church and State.”<sup>141</sup> Patricia Pender sums up Askew scholarship as such: “For Anne Askew in particular, paratexts produced by her early modern male editors have

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<sup>137</sup> Theresa Kemp, “Translating (Anne) Askew: The Textual Remains of a Sixteenth-Century Heretic and Saint,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 1021-1045; 1028.

<sup>138</sup> Paula McQuade, “‘Except that they had offended the Lawe’: Gender and Jurisprudence in *The Examinations of Anne Askew*,” *Literature and History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series 3 (1994): 1-14; 1, 2.

<sup>139</sup> Betteridge, 279.

<sup>140</sup> McQuade, 2 and 11.

<sup>141</sup> Beilin, 31.

been viewed variously as misleading impositions, attempts at co-option, and successful containment. These formulations construct an essentially combative relationship between male editor and female author in which the woman writer is already and always on the losing side.”<sup>142</sup>

Nonetheless, the fact of the matter is that there is not an ‘authentic’ Askew separate from Bale’s edition. Bale’s edition is as authentic as we get. No original manuscript exists of Askew’s text, and the first printing of it comes through John Bale. Without a male editor, there is no Askew. Female authorship, in the case of Askew’s *Examinations*, does not exist without a male editor. Neither, however, does Bale’s authorship exist without Askew’s martyred body. Bale and Askew are not antagonistic authors. Bale might fashion himself a writer through Askew, but it is Askew that is the authorizing force. Her text and body--corpus and corpse--facilitate Bale’s authorship. “[M]ulti-voiced, multi-authored, and (to extend a medieval metaphor) hermaphrodite, middle-chambered, owing something to both male and female,”<sup>143</sup> the *Examinations* display an authorial paradox: Bale authors Askew, and Askew authors Bale. Viewing *The Examinations* through this mutually codependent lens enables a wider understanding of how authorship functions in the text. Bale and Askew are not at war with one another and Bale is not maliciously using Askew; rather, the relationship is collaborative. The two figures cannot be separated. Therefore, this chapter does not isolate Askew’s text from

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<sup>142</sup> Pender, “Framing the Reformation Woman Writer: John Bale’s Prefaces to Anne Askew’s *Examinations*,” *Parergon* 29.2 (2012): 29-45; 31-32.

<sup>143</sup> David Wallace, Response to Genelle Gertz-Robinson, “Stepping into the Pulpit,” *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton. (Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 2005), 483-491; 484.

Bale's commentary because doing so negates an important dimension of early modern authorship. As scholars of book history have repeatedly demonstrated, authorship in early modern England was the result of printer, writer, editor, and readership. Authorship resides in a collective body. It is with this model of collective, collaborative authorship that we turn to a more focused analysis of the female martyred body in *Examinations* and how it functions to author Protestantism in England.

### **Authoring the Protestant Female Body**

In *Examinations*, the most visible marker of an embodied female authorship, which in turn generates Protestant discourse, is the woodcut frontispiece that accompanies both *Examinations*. The woodcut depicts a female martyr standing with a Bible in her right hand, which is turned upward to symbolize proper reading; a quill in her left hand, which resembles a martyr's palm (a connection to authorship, writing, and rewriting martyrdom); and a glowing aura around her head to represent God's radiance about her and possibly to mimic the halo frequently surrounding a Catholic martyr's head. Below the woman's feet sits a beastly dragon with a serpentine tail and a pope's hat upon its head. The woodcut, thought to be designed by Bale, reveals Bale's dependency on the female body to create Reformation narratives that can defeat the very real threat of Roman Catholicism's full return to England. Before analyzing the frontispiece, I should note that the female body, in particular, holds cultural importance for debating the true church. In fact, many theological and literary texts couch the Catholic-Protestant debate in rhetoric of selecting the right woman. In Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Redcrosse's journey in Book I is to discern between the virtuous Una or the duplicitous

Duessa as the truthful bride, which stands as an allegory for the England marrying Protestantism.<sup>144</sup> John Donne playfully highlights this quandary of choosing the Catholic or Protestant church in his sonnet, “Show me, dear Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear.” Donne wants to know which bride he should bed, which church to which he should wed himself. Bale, likewise, uses gendered language to delineate the Protestant church from the Catholic. In *Image of Both Churches*, Bale uses the virgin/whore dichotomy “as an expression of the fragile boundaries of belief systems;” furthermore, “the figural lability of female physiognomy is crucial both to his distinction *and* his redemption.”<sup>145</sup> One female body could indicate Catholicism or Protestantism; the distinction lies within how that female body is positioned. Bale faces this task with his representation of the female virgin martyr. Instead of recreating a whole new female body in which to root Protestantism, Bale takes the particular female body of Catholic virgin martyrs and transforms it to Protestant ends. Establishing Protestantism in England starts with depicting the right female body.

While many scholars have noted that the *Examinations* illuminates how Bale reforms Catholic martyrdom into a new genre of Protestant hagiography, they have not discussed Bale’s transformation of the iconography surrounding Catholic virgin martyrs

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<sup>144</sup> Claire McEachern, “Sects and the Single Woman: Spenser’s National Romance” in *Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590-1612* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996), 34-82.

<sup>145</sup> McEachern, “‘A whore at the first blush seemeth only a woman’: John Bale’s *Image of Both Churches* and the Terms of Religious Difference in the Early English Reformation,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 25.2 (1995): 245-269; 267.

into an Protestant female martyred body.<sup>146</sup> The woodcut that adorns *Examinations* both alludes to a Catholic visual culture of virgin martyrs while also erasing any trace of Catholicism from the martyred body. Bale was part of a Protestant print culture that was “forced to engage, appropriate, and reshape the conventions and expectations already established by those who had found the press to be a receptive medium for Catholicism.”<sup>147</sup> Legends of Catholic virgin saints were extremely popular and easily accessible through print up until the English Reformation. In fact, William Caxton first translated Jacobus de Voragine’s *Golden Legend* (also known in Latin as *legenda aurea*) into English in 1483, and his edition went through multiple editions until 1527.<sup>148</sup> The *Golden Legend* was a popular collection of the saints’ lives and included iconography along with the tales. Bale could have chosen any of the virgin saints as a model for Askew’s martyrdom because each of the virgin saints’ legends resemble Askew’s narrative. Virgin martyrs suffered imprisonment and extreme torture at the hands of pagan authorities for not recanting Christianity. Similarly, Henry VIII’s Roman Catholic-leaning officials also imprison and torture Askew in hopes that she will recant Reformist ideology. Bale casts Askew’s interrogators as demonic authorities, recalling the characteristic trope of devils in stories of virgin martyrs: “O temptacyon of Sathan” (32);

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<sup>146</sup> Fairfield, “*The Vocacyon of Johan Bale* and Early English Autobiography,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 24.3 (1971): 327-340; Dermot Cavanagh, “Reforming Sorveignty: John Bale And Tragic Drama,” *Interludes and Early Modern Society: Studies in Gender, Power and Theatricality*, ed. Peter Happé and Wim Hüskén (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 191-209; Meredith Anne Skura, “Identity in Autobiography and Protestant Identification with Saints: John Bale and St. Paul in *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale* (1553),” *Tudor Autobiography: Listening For Inwardness* (U of Chicago P, 2008).

<sup>147</sup> Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (U of Chicago P, 2000), 113.

<sup>148</sup> See also John Lydgate’s *The Lyfe of Seynt Margarete* (ca. 1430).

“O subtylde sede of the serpent” (33); “O vengeable tyraunt and devyll” (40); and “Christ showeth us in the vii. chaptre of Mathew...how we shall knowe a false prophete or an hypocryte, and wylleth to be ware of them. Their maner is as the devyls is, flatterynghly to tempt, and deceytfullye to trappe, that they maye at the lattre, most cruellye slee” (42).

Saint Margaret, however, offers an additional bonus for Bale: visual iconography. Margaret’s legend consists of her defeat of a dragon, which swallows her. Margaret triumphantly emerges from the dragon with a cross in hand. In English Catholic tradition, Margaret was of particular importance. Her emergence from the dragon made her the perfect saint of childbirth. She was sometimes seen as the bride of Christ. In other visual traditions Margaret appears standing atop the dragon or emerging from his backside with a cross in her left hand and a book in the right hand, making her a model for women’s literary activity. Margaret’s legend and iconography, I argue, provides Bale with an attractive, pre-existing martyr to adapt into new visual, embodied rhetoric for the English Reformation. Of the resemblance between Margaret and Anne Askew, John King writes, “In a simple exchange, Anne Askew defeats the dragon using a book rather than St. Margaret’s defense, the sign of the cross (Often Margaret, too, carries a book).”<sup>149</sup> There is more at stake, here, than just a “simple exchange.” Bale revises St. Margaret’s legend and iconography and positions Askew as the true female martyr, who escapes the devilish snares of Catholicism through vigorous literary engagement with the Bible, God’s Holy Word, and who offers Protestant redemption to England.

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<sup>149</sup> John R. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis*. (Princeton UP, 1989), 209.



One image that Bale capitalizes on is Margaret's iconographic allusion to the redemption narrative established in Genesis 3:15, otherwise known as the Protoevangelium. As we saw in Chapter 2, the Protoevangelium is one venue for embodied female authorship because it implies that Mary's birth of Christ is akin to authoring and materializing God's Word. God prophesies that Eve's future child will trample the head of the serpent, or Satan. Certainly, both Margaret's and Askew's positions as standing atop of a serpentine dragon visually echo the redemption narrative. Within the *Examinations*, Bale differentiates Askew from Margaret, however, by shaping Askew not as a maternal body that leads to salvation but as a martyred body akin to Christ's crucified body.<sup>150</sup> Upon Askew's first trip to prison, Bale writes, "Here is Christ yet troden on the hele, by that wycked serpent whych tempted Eva" (31). Bale's elucidation characterizes Askew's examiners as tempters, an allusion to Satan's temptation of Eve and of Christ, and even conflates Christ and Eve through Askew. Bale's phrase "wycked serpent" hearkens back to the full title of *first examination: The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe, lately martyred in Smythfelde, by the wycked Synagoge of Antichrist....* "Wycked Synagoge" linguistically resembles "wycked serpent," and "synagoge" carries an internal pun on the word "sin," a word intrinsically connected to the serpent Satan. Bale, indeed, identifies the "wycked serpent" that persecutes Askew as that found in Eden. His elucidation compares Askew to Christ as well. Given that Bale's elucidation comes at the moment of Askew's first arrest, it is possible that the reference to Christ and the serpent alludes to the betrayal of Christ in

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<sup>150</sup> Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*.

Gethsemane, which leads to Christ's arrest. Bale attests that for Askew's loyalty to the truth of Christ, "ye shall be betrayed of your owne nacyon and kyndred, and so throwne in preson." Bale then laments the reign of the serpent who has once more "becomen the prynce of thys worlde" (31). Certainly, Anne Askew, a symbol of English Protestantism, "stode fast by thys veryte of God" and was betrayed by countrymen following the wicked commands of Rome. The woodcut and Bale's elucidations place true Christendom in the female martyr of Anne Askew, who embodies Christ's defeat of Satan, Protestantism over Catholicism.<sup>151</sup> Askew's martyrdom signals the salvation of the English nation.

Askew's association with Christ has much to do with her righteous and direct engagement with the Word. From the very outset of the *Examinations*, Bale creates a very clear link between women and scripture. Most notably, the female martyr holds the Bible in her hand, above the dragon's head, implying scripture's authority over the pope's earthly authority, and also holds a quill in her hand as if to condone women's written engagement with the Bible, as well. The quill in particular visually rewrites the Catholic martyr's palm. This figure of Askew participates in a trend throughout Reformed Europe of women holding Bibles.<sup>152</sup> As the Protestant Reformation gained steam, English translations of the Bible, devotionals, and prayer books permeated print

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<sup>151</sup> The image of Askew, interestingly enough, anticipates a later frontispiece woodcut of Christ crushing death/Satan as he ascends out of Hell, quill in hand. The bottom left corner of the emblem refers also to Genesis 3 (Fig. 4).

<sup>152</sup> As Natalie Zemon Davis writes, "Wherever one looks at the Protestant propaganda of the 1540s to the 1560's, the Christian woman is identified by her relation to Scripture. Her sexual purity and control are demonstrated by her interest in the Bible" Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford UP, 1975), 78.

culture.<sup>153</sup> Women were at the center of such a textual, religious revolution. While the Reformation was primarily fostered by men, women's religious writing and their engagement with the Reformation had a strong effect on early modern culture, ranging from the family to the court. One of the more interesting legends of early Protestant lore was that Joan Bocher, mentioned in Chapter 2 for her renunciation of the Virgin Mary's purity, would smuggle books, such as William Tyndale's Bible, under her skirt while visiting the Henrician court. Rumored to have known Askew, Bocher shared her fate and even cites Askew in her defense.<sup>154</sup> Askew's martyrdom, at least in the example of Bocher, gave other women examples upon which to base transgression of doctrinal law.

Other noblewomen shared literary connections with Askew, as well. Bale himself would have seen the publication and circulation of Protestant religious texts by Katherine Parr, Lady Jane Grey, Anne Vaughan Lock, and the future Elizabeth I. Lock translated one of John Calvin's sermons, to which was appended the first printed English sonnet sequence, *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* (1560). Notably, Lock's translation was dedicated to Lady Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk, the wife of Henry VIII's friend, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk; the Duchess was a Protestant patron with connections to William Tyndale and Katherine Parr. Katherine Parr's *Prayers of Meditations* (1545) set a standard for women's religious writing. Elizabeth I went on to translate Parr's text into Italian, French, and Latin (1545). Published a year before *The first examinacyon*, Parr's *Prayers of Meditation* saw at least twenty editions before 1600, three of which came in

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<sup>153</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge UP, 1993).

<sup>154</sup> Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), pages 36-37.

the same year of its initial publication. Askew was supposedly affiliated with Parr and her circle, namely the Duchess of Suffolk, and in the *lattice examinacyon*, interrogators repeatedly ask Askew to name the specific women who were a part of Parr's Protestant circle. When Askew denies knowing of these women's religious leanings, her interrogators then place her on the rack. Bale's elucidation of this moment piercingly condemns the interrogators as members of a "Sodomytysh secte," who in a "madde ragynge furye," seek the blood of "vertuouse ladyes and most noble women" (122). Bale marks the Roman Catholics as sodomites not necessarily to attack their masculinity but to hold up Roman Catholicism as a religion that bars such noble, religious women as those whom Askew is being demanded to name. Bale promotes Protestantism as a space for righteous women.

More to the point, Bale saw women as essential to furthering English Protestantism. Shortly after his publication of Askew's *Examinations*, Bale promoted Elizabeth Tudor's *Godly Meditation of the Christian Soul* (1548). The paratexts of *Godly Meditations* directly link to the *Examinations*. The woodcut for *Godly Meditation* shows Princess Elizabeth bowing to Christ. In her hand is a book, presumably a Bible, outstretched to Christ, which could symbolize that women's access to Christ comes through literacy and not virgin saints, such as Saint Margaret or Katherine, the patron saint of learning. Bale even creates a Reformed lineage between Elizabeth and Askew, praising "the youthful translator, Princess Elizabeth, as an intellectual descendant of Anne Askew, the martyr who 'hath strongly troden downe the head of the serpent, and gone hence with most noble vycory over the pestyferouse seede of that vyperouse

worme of Rome, the gates of helle not prevaylynge agaynst her' (F6<sup>v</sup>)."<sup>155</sup> Askew is a Protestant foremother, and Bale, like many Reformers in 1548, saw Elizabeth as a legitimate Protestant heir to the throne.

Bale's correlation of Askew with the Bible extends beyond the woodcut frontispiece into Askew's narrative. In one of the most discussed passages of the *Examinations*, when Askew refuses to answer her examiner's (Bishop's Chancellor) charge that she has been "utterynge the scriptures" (29), a transgression of Pauline doctrine that demanded women "speake" nor "talked of the worde of God," Askew remarks,

I answered hym, that I knewe Paules meanynge so well as he, whych is, i. Corinthiorum xiiii. that a woman ought not to speake in the congregacyon by the waye of teachynge. And then I asked hym, how manye women he had seane, go into the pulpett and preache. He sayde, he never sawe non. Then I sayd, he ought to fynde no faute in poore women, except they had offended the lawe. (30).

Askew's extremely cheeky answer is often commented upon in scholarship. This moment demonstrates Askew's sharp wit and intimate knowledge of the scriptures, which allows her to evade the Bishop Chancellor's accusation and even turn the prosecutor into the criminal. Askew's reply implies that Bishop Chancellor has misinterpreted scripture--women are prohibited from teaching, not from speaking, in church. The Bishop Chancellor has wrongfully harassed many "poore women." Scholars love Askew's response but rarely comment upon Bale's elucidation of this moment, even though Bale

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<sup>155</sup> King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, 209.

condones Askew's answer and promotes women's religious literacy practices. I quote

Bale in full:

Plenteouse ynough is her answer here, unto thys quarellynge, and (as apereth) unlearned chancellour. Many godlye women both in the olde lawe and the newe, were lerned in the scriptures, and made utteraunce of them to the glorye of God. As we reade of Helisabeth, Marye, and Anna the wydowe, Lu. 1. and 2. yet were they not rebuked for it. yea, Marye Christes mother retayned all, that was afterwarde written of hym, Luc. 2. yet was it not imputed unto her an offence. Christ blamed not the woman that cryed whyls he was in preachynge, happye is the wombe that bare the, Luce 11. The women whych gave knowlege to hys dyscyples, that he was rysen from deathe to lyfe, dyscomfyted not he, but solaced them with hys most gloryouse apearance. Mat. 28. Jo. 20. In the prymatyve church, specyallye in Saynt Hieromes tyme, was it a great prayse unto women to be lerned in the scriptures. Great commendacyons geveth our Englysh Cronycles to Helena, Ursula, and Hilda, women of our nacyon, for beyng lerned also in the scriptures. Soche a woman was the seyde Hilda, as openly dysputed in them agaynst the supersticyons of certen byshoppes. But thy chancellour by lyke, chaunced upon the blynde popysh worke whych Walter Hunte a whyte frye, wrote iiii. score yeares ago, Contra doctrices mulieres, agaynst scole women, or els some otherlyke Romysh beggeries. (30-31).

In his commentary, Bale traces a genealogy of learned English Protestant women that begins with Christ's birth; continues throughout his childhood, crucifixion, and resurrection and the establishment of the English primitive church; and resurfaces in Anne Askew. Askew's answer to the Bishop Chancellor and her body placed on trial for "utterynge the scriptures," authorizes Bale's own condemnation of the Bishop Chancellor and his faulty reading practices. The Bishop Chancellor and other Catholic-leaning politicians are so unlearned in scripture that they oppose women's direct engagement with scripture even though Christ himself desires it. Bale's commentary reminds readers that learning, reciting, and internalizing scripture is an embodied process, in which women were first to participate. Elizabeth is John the Baptist's mother, and it is her son

that leaps in her womb when the pregnant Mary enters Elizabeth's presence (Luke 1:39-45). Mary obviously is the mother of Christ (though in a very Protestant way, Bale silently omits the phrase, the "Virgin Mary"). The nameless woman who cries out during Christ's preaching, after exorcising a demon from a man, praises Christ by blessing his mother and her womb and breasts that housed and nursed him (Luke 11:29). Women's engagement with scripture is an inherently embodied process. Juxtaposed to Bale's support of this bodily process is the Bishop Chancellor's rebuke of Askew's reported preaching of the Word of God, which is tied up with the early modern trifecta that a woman is to be chaste, silent, and obedient.

Bale declares that not only should women read, retain, and repeat God's Word but also that it is *righteous* for them to do so. When Askew's examiners detain and condemn her for speaking the gospel, they are in direct violation to God's Word and hinder the growth of the true religion. Krista Kesserling claims that Bale "argues that for women properly to discharge their duties as Christ's members, they must be learned; this learning would be for the benefit not only of the woman and her family, but for Christendom as a whole."<sup>156</sup> Bale wins here, too. He champions women's words as he supports Askew and distances himself from the Bishop's Chancellor and Bale's own Carmelite ancestor, Walter Hunte, whose book "Contra doctrices mulieres" (Bale translates as "agaynst scole women" or against learned women) opposes women's scriptural learning. The Bishop's Chancellor, unlike Bale, is unlearned in scripture, in the primitive church, and in

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<sup>156</sup> Krista Kesserling, "Representations Of Women In Tudor Historiography: John Bale And The Rhetoric Of Exemplarity," *Renaissance And Reformation/Renaissance Et Réforme* 22.2 (1998): 41-61; 43.

England's past; it is Bale's job to correct this and help lead England into true Christendom, by defending Askew and Protestant women's scriptural literacy even against Henry VIII's mandates. At the time of publishing the *Examinations*, Bale is already in exile and on Henry VIII's list of banned authors, but he furthers his political transgression by promoting women's bible reading. Henry VIII had recently passed the Act of the Advancement of True Religion (1543), which not only reaffirmed the Act of the Six Articles but also "sought to control the reading of the Bible in English" by policing through class and gender: "'no woomen nor artificers prentices jouneymen serving men...' should read the English Bible 'pryvatelie or openlie.'"<sup>157</sup> Bale opposes such law probably not because of its gendered implications but also because it is unlawful in God's eyes. As Bale shows, the Word of God, or Christ, is open to especially to women who because of their biblical predecessors, should be trusted to keep it and repeat it.

If we return to the woodcut frontispieces adorning both of Askew's *Examinations*, we see further association between women and scripture. Beneath the emblem of the female martyr on the *The first examinacyon* is a quotation from Proverbs 31: "Favoure is disceytfull / and bewtye is a vayne thyng. But a woman that feareth the lorde / is worthy to be praysed. She openeth her mouthe to wysdome / and in her language is the lawe of grace." This spliced-together excerpt from two separate verses (31 and 26) highlights women's holiness that comes from direct engagement with scripture. Women's language, as seen in Chapter 2, is intimately tied to the female body, either marking the

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<sup>157</sup> Qtd. in Beilin, *Examinations*, xxvi.



female body as virtuous or deviant. Proverbs itself emphasizes this dichotomy. Proverbs 7 notes that sexually immoral women entrap men with “swete wordes” and “flateringe lippes,”<sup>158</sup> spewing forth false promises, whereas Askew speaks with wisdom. Learned in the scripture, Askew and other Protestant women can relay the true “lawe of grace” to those in need.

*The lattu examinacyon* contains many instances where Bale applauds Askew’s recitation of scripture that reflects a spiritual wisdom. For instance, Bale opens *The lattu examinacyon* with a letter Askew writes “unto a secret fryde of hers” (88). The letter expresses Askew’s hopes to persuade her friend of “the truthe concernyne the lordes supper,” citing Christ’s declaration for his apostles to eat in remembrance of him. Askew explains the Eucharist as an “outwarde sygne or token” and not to be read as Christ literally dwelling within those who partake (88). Of Askew’s beliefs, Bale assures readers, “Agreeable is thys womannis doctryne here, to the scriptures of both testamentes;” moreover, “the true recyvers” should be “taught of God, and lerned of the heavenly father and not of synnefull mennes customes” (89). Elucidating Askew’s words, Bale reiterates the truth of the Eucharist and casts the “true” believers as those who rightfully read and recite God’s scripture rather than those who adhere to Catholic doctrine, which adds to scripture, or what Bale calls “synnefull mennes customes.” Elsewhere Bale commends Askew for not reverting to antiquated narratives: “Neyther lasheth thys woman out in her extreme troubles, language of dispayre nor yet blasphemouse wordes agaynst God with the unbelevynge, but uttereth the scriptures in

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<sup>158</sup> Coverdale Bible, 1535. See also Proverbs 2:16 and 22:14.

wonderfull habundaunce to hys lawde and prayse....Not by olde narracyons and fables, but by the most pure worde of God, as ded Daniel and Steven” (106). Askew’s words display the “most evydent sygnes of a Christen martry” and faithfulness as she “allegeth not...lyenge legendes, popysh fables, nor yet olde wyves parables, but the most lyvelye autorytees and examples of the sacred Byble” (132). For Bale, Askew’s holy language marks her as the perfect martyr and ideal for cultivating a Protestant readership that should rely solely on scripture and Protestant writers, like Bale who promotes Protestantism.

That Bale positions Askew as the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, who intimately knows God’s laws and reveals them to her family, also alludes to Askew’s real-life marital struggles. As a wife of Catholic Thomas Kyme, Askew sought, but was never rewarded, a divorce from Kyme on religious grounds. In the *latter examinacyon*, Bale praises Askew’s desire for a divorce. Unsurprisingly, Askew’s education about a proper, divinely-ordained marriage begins with virtuous reading habits: “by oft readynge of the sacred Bible, she fell clerelye from all olde superstycyons of papystyre, to a perfyght beleve in Jhesus Christ” (93). Bale even distorts Pauline doctrine of divorce to support Askew’s separation, stating that marriage to an unbeliever is actual grounds for separation. His approval of her divorce even shows in Bale’s decision to refer to Askew as “Askew” instead of Anne Kyme. Given that divorce was such a taboo topic, especially when women sought it from men, it is shocking to see Bale condone Askew’s actions. Bale’s support for Askew’s divorce, however, allows Bale to cast Askew as Christ’s redeemed spouse. Although Askew is married and presumably not a virgin, Bale labels

her as such. When Askew refuses to sign her name to a document that would confirm her belief in transubstantiation, Bale writes,

But thys godlye woman wolde corrupt her faythe with no soche beggerye, least she in so doyng shuld admitt them and their pope to sytt in her conscyence above the eternall God, whych is their dayly stodye, 2. Thes. 2, A vyrgyne was she in that behalf, redemed from the earthe and folowyng the lambe, and havynge in her forehead the fathers name written. Apocalypsys 14. (61).

Central to Askew's virginity is that she refuses to allow popish language to enter her body, and instead she keeps God as the true authority of her conscience. Bale's description of Askew's estranged relationship with her husband Thomas Kyme contains similar language: Askew "coude not thynke hym worthy of her marryge whych so spyghtfullye hated God the chefe auctor of marryage" (93). In short, Bale crafts Askew as a model Protestant wife, ranging from her virtuous wisdom and language, to daily Bible reading, and finally, to her reliance on the true author--God--by separating from her supposed infidel husband. Over and over again, Bale shows how Askew embodies God's Word. Catholic women might have sought St. Margaret and other virgin saints as their mediator to God, but the new English Protestant woman, could model themselves on Askew and embody her direct access to God, Christ, and the scriptures.

### **Bale's Hands**

While Askew's female martyred body promotes English Protestantism, Bale's hands ensure that Protestantism is written into English church history. Throughout the *Examinations*, Bale presents himself to readers as having "one verye specyall" role in reviving, revising, and rewriting England's ecclesiastical history. Bale mimics his biblical

namesakes, John the Baptist and John the Revelator, and like Bede, John Wyclef, and William Tyndale, Bale archives an ongoing battle between the true church and the Antichrist.<sup>159</sup> The battle happens in print between “popysh” church historians who write “hystories of Apostles and martyrs,” but who have “no soche autortye” (6) and Bale who records “the godlye asnwes and tryumphaunt sufferynge of the martyrs” (75). By the time Bale edits *Examinations*, Henry VIII has ordered the burning of Protestant books and bodies, but Bale assures his readers and warns his antagonists that Protestantism will not be erased from history. The fires do not consume but cleanse: “Full manye a Christen hart have rysen and wyll rise from the pope to Christ through the occasyon of their consumynge in the fyre. As the saynge is, of their ashes wyll more of the same opynyon aryse” (154). Instead, like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, Protestant books and martyrs, alike, regenerate the truth throughout England. Martyrs give their full bodies to the flames; Bale offers up his hands to the task.

Hands and handwriting are two constant themes throughout the *Examinations*. Instances of Bale pitting his writing against that of the Roman Catholics’ abound throughout the *Examinations*, with the first example coming early in the *first examinacyon*. Bale claims that previous legends of martyrs will have no “autortye” like his new hagiographies will since his writing draws its influence from the verity of Christ (6). Often Bale cites the Roman Catholic authorities as mishandling Askew and the other martyrs. Christ’s “elect vessels[.] maye not now perysh at all handes” (meaning of the

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<sup>159</sup> Bale’s self-proclaimed role as revelator is also seen in his *Image of both Churches* (1545), the first English commentary on Revelations.

political authorities), but their endeavors will be spread across Europe by the holy handwriting of Bale as he promises to write hagiographies in English and in Latin (7-8).

Self-promotion also exists in Askew's *Examinations*. After Askew denies the holiness of private masses, Bale takes the opportunity to decry further "The devylyshnesse of thys newe doctryne of theyrs," meaning the mass, and promises that he will contest such doctrine in future books: "in my bokes agaynst fryre Peryne and Wynchestre, and therfor I write the lesse here" (53). In a more humorous exchange in which Askew's examiners ask "whether a mouse eatynge the hoste, receyved God or no?," to which Askew gives "no answe, but smyled" (27), Bale explains that this is false doctrine set forth by Perin and Winchester, concluding,

No wyse man wyll thynke, that Christ wyll dwell in a mouse, nor yet that a mouse can dwell in Christ, though it be the doctryne of these doughtye dowsepers, for they shall find no scriptures for it. If these men were not enemyes to faythe and fryndes to Idolatrye, they wolde never teache soche fylthye lernynge. More of thys shall I wryte (God wyllynge) in the answe of their bokes. (29).

Askew refutes false doctrine, which Bale applauds and further reinforces via self-propagation.

Bale's hands are not the only ones to make an appearance in the *Examinations*. Askew's hands are quite visible as well. Bale insistently promises that Askew's narrative is in "her owne hande writynge" and that she entrusted her text to Bale (7). Askew "wrote with her owne hande" so "that the truth theroff myght be knowne the worlde over" (19). Bale's elucidations and his publication of Askew's text and martyred body are an act of correctly transmitting the gospel through England, revealing the truth dwelling in Askew

to readers. Askew's authentic text and truthful citations of scripture (as seen above) is juxtaposed to false papist writings. Bale believes that Catholic doctrine is mostly "mannys invencyon" which materializes into false texts (25). "Popysh heretykes," for example, erroneously claim that the Eucharist is God incarnate and profligate such doctrine "by their owne hande wrytynges" (35). Scriptural authority of Catholic masses, furthermore, is not found "in all the Byble, and therfor it perteyneth not to faythe" (21). Bale condemns Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and their masses by citing Proverbs 30:6, which cautions anyone from adding to scripture: "Adde thou not vnto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a lyar." Askew also attests to God's truthful scripture by refusing to "set her hande," or sign her name, to faulty doctrinal bills drawn up by her examiners (136, 137). For Bale, signing one's name to such documents marks one as God's enemy. As Bale asserts, "And unto thys we must set our hande wrytynge, that we maye be knowne for Antichrists cattell" (103).

It is not just that Askew refuses to write actively against God's laws, but that to "set her hand" to anything that opposes the Bible would be to oppose her very self. The woodcut frontispiece of the *Examinations* and its accompanying scripture of Psalm 116, "The veryte of the lorde endureth foreuer," positions Askew as the embodiment of truth and, as discussed above, a Christ figure. Like Christ who himself claims, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6), Askew's martyred body reveals the Protestant truth and directs many men to God. Askew is also similar to Christ in her silence and in her puzzling answers to her examiners, imitating moments when Christ frustrates and mystifies his critics by telling parables and

answering their questions with questions. Bale's role is to discern, explain, and distribute Askew's meaning through his own handwriting.

Bale's language of hands and handwriting colors his descriptions of Askew's torture and execution. Bale likens Askew's execution to Christ's crucifixion and continually points to the mishandling of Askew's body. In his conclusion to the *latter examinacyon*, Bale extensively compares the Roman Catholic authorities who deliver Askew to be burnt at the stake to Pilate who gives Christ to be crucified. Bale's comparison resonates on the level of biblical imagery as well as narrative. Pilate famously washes his hands to clear his conscience about delivering Christ to those who want him dead. "By delayes he dyferred the sentence, and fynallye washed hys handes as one that was clere from their tyrannye," writes Bale of Pilate. However, the judges of Askew's case are quick to condemn Askew: "with their wycked affyntyte to the puffed up porkelynges of the pope, Gardyner, Bonner, and soch other, they folowed their cruell counsell, they enprysoned her, judged her, condempned her, and racked her at the last with *their owne poluted bloudye tormentours handes* tyll the vaynes and synnowes brast" (152-153, emphasis added). Pilate's actions can be forgiven, but those of the English authorities cannot be. The English authorities not only condemn but also participate with their own hands in the torture of Askew until they have broken her body. English Catholic authorities break Askew's body. Bale's hands restore it, metaphorically gathering up Askew's corpse to transform it into a living, textual embodiment of the Protestant Reformation.

Askew's textual body is left in the hands of Bale, but it is her body that facilitates an embodied female authorship that allows Bale to reform England from its Catholic stronghold, which affronts on all ends, but especially through print. In his autobiographical treatise *Vocacyon of John Bale to the Bishop of Ossorie* (1553), Bale includes a woodcut reminiscent of the one adorning Askew's *Examinations*: female Veritas holds a book in her right hand inscribed with the words, 'verbum dei' (Latin for "Word of God"), and triumphantly crushes a serpent beneath her feet. Written above the woman is Psalm 116, the same scripture that appears on the Askew woodcut.<sup>160</sup> The *Vocacyon* woodcut demonstrates that Bale's ordained occupation is to spread God's truth, but also that Bale's authorial role is closely linked to his previous work with Askew.

Finally, *The latter examinacyon* contains a biblical verse that highlights the collaborative efforts of Askew and Bale to author a Protestant England: "I wyll pure out my sprete up[on] all flesh (sayth God) your sonnes and your doughters shall prophecye. And who so euer call on the name of the lorde shall be saued. Johel ij." Askew's role as daughter of God who embodies faith and truth in the face of devilish tormentors is balanced by Bale's role as a son who aptly records Askew's adherence to the gospel and then transmits this throughout England. Askew and Bale are codependent members of Christ's body, working to promote the gospel truth: that Protestantism is the true Christian faith. It takes Bale and Askew, Askew and Bale to create a Protestant England.

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<sup>160</sup> Peter Happé, "A Catalogue of Illustrations in the Books of John Bale," *Leeds Studies in English* 32 (2001): 81-118. John King also notes that the image of *Veritas* (Truth) is a classical epigram, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, 189.



**CHAPTER IV**  
**“TELL NO DYING-TALE”:**  
**THE TRAGIC AUTHORSHIP OF DEAD WIVES**

“Corpse Gives Birth!” This might be the headline of a tabloid or spoof magazine. Surely, the tale must be fiction. Corpses cannot birth. Corpses are lifeless. Yet late nineteenth-century obstetrics publications, such as *Transactions of Obstetrical Society of London* (1872) and *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* (1896), relate multiple instances of postmortem birth, a phenomenon that obstetrician John Whitridge Williams would later coin as “coffin birth.” According to these obstetrics manuals, coffin birth goes back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1551, a woman gave birth to twins four hours after being hanged as a victim of the Spanish Inquisition. In a more gruesome tale, a pregnant woman in Brussels, 1633, died on a Thursday, had abdominal movements on Friday and ‘gave birth’ to a dead child on Saturday.<sup>161</sup> Numerous other reports consist of witnesses who hear sighing and moaning from a coffin containing a dead woman; when officials open the coffin, they find two bodies where previously there had only been one: a mother and her dead newborn.

These outlandish tales parallel the tales of monstrous births found in early modern midwife books, as explored in Chapter 2. While Chapter 2 traced the development of a maternal authorship that was sometimes pejorative and at other times praiseworthy, I

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<sup>161</sup> George M. Gould and Walter L. Pyle, *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* (Blacksleet River, 1956), 82-83. *GoogleBooks.com*.

want to consider a much more unlikely source of embodied female authorship: the wife's corpse. Taking up coffin birth tales as a metaphor for the authoring capabilities of the female corpse, this chapter locates authorial agency in the wife's corpse found in early modern drama: Mariam, of Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613); Desdemona of William Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604); and Hermione of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1623).<sup>162</sup> In this chapter, I argue that the wife's corpse generates narrative life within the play. In these wives' tales, death is not the end, but the beginning.

Granted, the early modern stage is an odd place to search for embodied female authorship given first, the absence of the actual female body on stage and second, the paucity of women stage-dramatists. The early modern stage has conveniently, although erroneously, been labeled an "all-male stage:" all male actors, male dramatists and male proprietors.<sup>163</sup> However, the dearth of women dramatists has led to a productive

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<sup>162</sup> Scholarship has tended to place these plays in conversation with an attention to pedagogy. Maureen Quilligan, "Staging Gender: William Shakespeare and Elizabeth Cary," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, edited by James Grantham (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 208-232; Nancy Gutierrez, "Why William and Judith Both Need Their Own Rooms," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.4 (1996): 424-32; Theresa D. Kemp, "The Family Is a Little Commonwealth: Teaching *Mariam* and *Othello* in a Special-Topics Course on Domestic England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.4 (1996): 451-460; Margu rite Corporaal, "Moor, She Was Chaste. She Loved Thee, Cruel Moor!: *Othello* as a Starting Point for Alternative Dramatic Representations of the Female Voice," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 33 (2002): 99-111; Elizabeth Gruber, "Insurgent Flesh: Epistemology and Violence in *Othello* and *Mariam*," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 32.4 (2003): 393-410; Ina Habermann, *Staging Slander and Gender in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003); Lisa Gim, "Teaching *Othello* with the Works of Elizabeth Cary and Aphra Behn" in *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Othello*, edited by Maurice Hunt (New York: MLA, 2005), 180-86; and Lesley Peterson. "To Have and to Hold Still: Marriage and Monumentalizing in Early Modern English Drama" in *Marriage in Premodern Europe: Italy and Beyond*, edited by Jacqueline Murray (Toronto, ON: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2012), 333-355.

<sup>163</sup> Moreover, much scholarship on early modern dramatic authorship reinforces the 'all-male' stage myth by thinking of dramatic authorship solely in terms of male writers. See, for instance, Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England: Buggeswords* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Gordon McMullan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing: Authorship in the Proximity of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007); the special volume of *Shakespeare Studies*

mourning among scholars of early modern women who have creatively rethought women's participation in the theater. Such scholars have proved that the stage might have lacked women but that playhouses were not short of women, ranging from spectators to workers (gatherers, prostitutes, and prop makers) to patrons and owners of playhouses.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, the public stage was not the only avenue for drama. Indeed, aristocratic women freely acted in court masques, and elite women wrote numerous closet dramas: Mary Sidney, Elizabeth Cary--who makes an appearance in this chapter--Lady Mary Wroth, Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish, and Margaret Cavendish.<sup>165</sup> In short, the female body was never absent from drama but rather strikingly present.

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dedicated to the authorship question, *Shakespeare Studies* 20 (2008); and Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship* (Cambridge, 2008).

<sup>164</sup> For a general introduction, along with a wide array of primary documents, discussing women's participation in early modern theatre, ranging from spectators to playhouse gatherers and owners, see the anthology, *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*. Ed. S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies. London: Routledge, 1996 and *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance, 1594-1998*. Ed. S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, London: Routledge, 1998. Focusing on women as spectators and active shapers of Renaissance dramatic culture see Jean E. Howard, "The Materiality of Ideology: Women as Spectators, Spectacles, and Paying Customers in the English Public Theater" in *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994, 74-93. Also, Andrew Gurr *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (1987). Stephen Orgel, "Nobody's Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88.1 (1989): 7-29. In addition to spectatorship, women's work on and off-stage has become an important trend in early modern women's participation in early modern drama. Fiona McNeill, *Poor Women in Shakespeare*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007, 3-5. Natasha Korda, "Insubstantial Pageants: Women's Work and the (Im)material Culture of the Early Modern Stage" *Shakespeare* 7.4 (2011), 413-431 and *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage*. Philadelphia U of Pennsylvania P, 2011.

<sup>165</sup> Alison Findlay, Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, and Gweno Williams, *Women in Dramatic Production, 1550-1700* (Harlow England: Longman, 2000). Clare McManus *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court (1590-1619)* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) and *Women and Culture at the Courts of the Stuart Queens* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Marta Straznicky, *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); Sophie Tomlinson, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge UP, 2005); Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Modern Women's Drama* (Cambridge UP, 2006); Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, *Women Players in England, 1500-1660* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

Chapter 4 contributes to feminist and materialist scholarship that finds women's agency in early modern drama, one of the more unsuspecting places in early modern literature. I argue that if we look closer within the worlds of early modern tragedy, we find alternative narratives about female authorship that allow room for redefining female agency in the wife's corpse that often clutters early modern tragedy.<sup>166</sup> The chosen tragedies of *Mariam* and *Othello* along with the tragicomedy *The Winter's Tale* all exhibit an intense focus on the instability of the female body and the proliferation of narratives that come from it; the wife's corpse in each of these plays generates yet another narrative that, as I suggest, destabilizes the play's main plot, which is based upon the sexually deviant wife.

The heroines of this chapter, Mariam, Desdemona, and Hermione, do not physically write, but they facilitate narratives, pushing their respective plays in new directions. Their dead bodies generate counter narratives of sexual innocence that their husbands must reconcile with the plays' dominant narrative of wifely infidelity. In each of the three plays, authorship and the husband's authority are constructed and dependent upon the chaste wife. So when a slanderous narrative of adultery becomes the controlling narrative of each play, which the husband chooses to read upon his wife's body, he finds his authority threatened. The husband then attempts to contain the suspicious wife's body: Herod by beheading Mariam, Othello by smothering Desdemona, and Leontes by

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<sup>166</sup> Comedies have their own wealth of dead wives--the dead, missing mothers. See Mary Beth Rose, "Where Are the Mothers in Shakespeare? Options for Gender Representation in the English Renaissance" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991): 291-314.

imprisoning Hermione. However, the husband can neither contain the female body nor fix slanderous narratives of infidelity upon it.

The dead wife rebels. Her corpse authors sexual innocence. She forces her husband to relinquish control of the dominating narrative of adultery that has condemned her and to reconstruct a narrative of innocence. The wife is not a passive object upon which the husband writes slander; rather, she actively creates a new script for her husband to follow. Viewing the dead female bodies of Mariam, Desdemona, and Hermione as models of embodied female authorship demonstrates another instance of the female body as agent of narrative change even despite the conventional generic constraints of tragedy as hostile and destructive to the female body.<sup>167</sup>

### **The Tragedy of the Wife's Corpse**

While the early modern body has become a hot commodity in scholarship, few scholars have thought specifically about the staged female corpse.<sup>168</sup> The female corpse is

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<sup>167</sup> Foundational texts are Linda Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (Stanford UP, 1982); Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985); and Dymna Callaghan, *Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy: A Study of King Lear, Othello, The Duchess of Malfi, and The White Devil* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989). Some scholars are beginning to reverse traditional understandings of women's roles in tragedies. Marguerite A. Tassi's *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare: Gender, Genre, and Ethics* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna UP, 2011), gives a good account of how revenge narratives (often found in tragedy) often work in favor of women or women uptake these revenge narratives.

<sup>168</sup> Ranging from the cross-dressed body of male actors to dramatic depictions of the maternal body, scholars have wasted no ink on the body. Carol Chillington Rutter aptly catalogues the abundance of body criticism: "Bakhtin taught us about the carnivalised body; Laqueur, the sexualized body. Bodies sodomised (Goldberg); patriarchally enclosed (Stallybrass); effeminised (Levine); embarrassed (Paster); anatomised (Sawday) have all been mustered in what Elam calls 'a veritable ghost army of early modern organisms.'" Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare's Stage*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001, 3. Added to Rutter's list is Philippa Berry, *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999; Rutter; Susan Edinburgh Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburg, Scotland: Edinburgh UP, 2005); Russell West-Pavlov, *Bodies and Their Spaces: System, Crisis and Transformation in Early Modern*

iconic in early modern tragedy. As Carol Rutter aptly states, “death is a gendered topic in Shakespeare,”<sup>169</sup> and according to Phillipa Berry, death “is often emblematically embodied...by a dead or dying woman.”<sup>170</sup> Women die offstage, usually as an inconsequential backdrop for the main hero’s death, but their corpses are often brought back onto stage as an object of spectacle. Shakespeare’s “feminine dyings figure death repeatedly, not as an ending, but as a process: an *interitus* or passing between...the tragedies reinfect [this process] as a highly material, bodily process that is mysteriously productive.”<sup>171</sup> Death is not the end but the beginning of another chapter--a transitional state of being. The female body perfectly encapsulates this transitional, embodied “mysteriously productive” process because it is often positioned as the cyclical source of birth and death; the female body resists fixity.

Rutter, pondering the function of the corpse upon stage, remarks,

Narratively...the body that plays dead works at the margin: it comes in at the end; it collects up final meanings. The scrutiny of the body, the interpretations attached to it through last rites and contemplations, the final stories told about it in consolation or in rage work to fix the narrative’s final form. Looking at the body

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*Theater* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2006); Amanda Bailey, *Flaunting: Style and the Subversive Male Body in Renaissance England* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007); Jennifer Waldron’s *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice, and Early Modern Theater* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Deborah Uman, ed. *Staging the Blazon in Early Modern English Theater* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2013).

<sup>169</sup> Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare’s Stage*, (London and New York: Routledge) 2001, 4.

<sup>170</sup> Philippa Berry, *Shakespeare’s Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies* (London and New York: Routledge) 1999, 5.

<sup>171</sup> Berry, 5.

as a sign loaded with ‘story,’ we discover whether what we have been watching is desolate tragedy or grotesque comedy.”<sup>172</sup>

In other words, the corpse is crucial to interpretations of plays. Of Cordelia in *King Lear*, Rutter playfully writes,

Cordelia-as-a corpse is the spectacle that holds and directs the all-male gaze, passive, unresisting, whatever Lear makes her.

Or not. For the body I have just been describing, positioned inside a gendered discursive nexus, is attached to that other, performative body. Dead, her text exhausted, Cordelia has nothing to act yet everything to play for. She is indeed a prop, ...a theatre prop, ‘property’--belonging to--Lear’s performance. And, like all Shakespeare’s properties from Desdemona’s handkerchief and Cressida’s glove to Yorick’s skull and Antony’s sword, she is both a troubled and troubling signifier. Performing death, her corpse alienates...Lear’s performance by challenging the anguish Lear attempts to fix upon it. The discursive effect of this is to frame the theatrical site of female death not as a conformable but as a subversive site. Cordelia’s body does not behave in death. Her corpse plays up.<sup>173</sup>

Berry and Rutter both attribute agency to the female corpse. It “works,” “plays up,” and disrupts narratives. The female corpse “won’t let matters die.”<sup>174</sup> The female corpse is not static or fixed. It is anything but lifeless.

Berry’s and Rutter’s theories of the female corpse provide a useful reconsideration of the corpses of Mariam, Desdemona, and Hermione. Read conventionally, these plays follow a narrative teleology in which the women are doomed from the beginning to be victims of their husbands, murdered for their rumored sexual transgressions. However, read through the lens of Berry’s and Rutter’s active female

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<sup>172</sup> Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 2.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

corpse, the wives contain power in their bodies even within the domineering teleological “doomed-from-the-start” narrative. The wife’s corpse resists fixity and any final narratives that are foisted upon it and also generates alternative narratives. These wives may experience death, but their corpses give birth to a new story. Their bodies are paradoxes--the very thing that dooms them is precisely what gives them authorial agency. They, too, are coffin birth stories. We begin with Mariam’s bodily dissent, move to Desdemona’s loyal death, and end with Hermione’s return from the grave. In the wives’ dead bodies, there is narrative life.

### **Mariam’s Tragic Authority**

*The Tragedy of Mariam* insists upon the wife’s body (in life and death) as a source of warring narratives.<sup>175</sup> Mariam, speaking on the supposed death of her husband Herod, opens the play with a wavering soliloquy:

How oft have I with public voice run on  
 To censure Rome’s last hero for deceit  
 Because he wept when Pompey’s life was gone,  
 Yet when he lived, he thought his name too great?  
 But now I do recant, and, Roman lord,

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<sup>175</sup> The following are important works of scholarship on *The Tragedy of Mariam*; the majority of scholarship focuses on Mariam’s body, her relationship with Herod, and her transgressive behavior. More scholarship is beginning to note the value of genre when reading this play. Margaret Ferguson, “The Spectre of Resistance: *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613),” *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. David S. Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 235-250; Nancy A. Gutierrez, “Valuing *Mariam*: Genre Study and Feminist Analysis,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 10 (1991): 233-51; Laurie J. Shannon, “*The Tragedie of Mariam*: Cary’s Critique of the Terms of Founding Social Discourses,” *English Literary Renaissance* 24.1 (1994): 135-53; Marta Straznicky, “‘Profane Stoical Paradoxes’: *The Tragedie of Mariam* and Sidneian Closet Drama,” *English Literary Renaissance* 24 (1994): 104-34; Karen Raber, “Gender and the Political Subject in *The Tragedy of Mariam*,” *SEL* 35 (1995): 321-43; Naomi J. Miller, “Domestic Politics in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam*,” *SEL* 37 (1997): 353-69; and Heather Ostman, “Backbiters, Flatters, and Monarchs: Domestic Politics in *The Tragedy of Mariam*,” *Elizabeth Cary*, ed. Karen Raber (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 303-25.



Excuse too rash a judgment in a woman!  
My sex pleads pardon; pardon then afford;  
Mistaking is with us but too too common.  
Now do I find, by self-experience taught,  
One object yields both grief and joy:  
You wept indeed when on his worth you thought,  
But joyed that slaughter did your foe destroy.  
So at his death your eyes true drops did rain,  
Whom, dead, you did not wish alive again. (1.1.1-14)<sup>176</sup>

Cary's use of enjambment in the first line coupled with the line's subject matter--"How oft have I with public voice run on"--immediately associates Mariam as unstable and uncontrollable since her speech itself is flowing over to the next line. Mariam uses a duplicitous metaphor to describe her body: "One object yields both grief and joy." This "one object" lacks stability and produces an infinite amount of meanings. Herod's death, the "one object," produces simultaneous "grief and joy" from Mariam. As an obedient wife and subject to the king, she laments the death of Herod. At the same time, as a loyal daughter and sister and rightful heir to the Judean throne, she joys at the death of the man who executed her relatives for political benefit (1.1.35-46). The "one object," then, may not just be Herod's death but Mariam's reactionary body. Mariam openly chastises herself for previously censuring Caesar's "deceit" as he cried over Pompey's death "but joyed that slaughter" because now she finds herself in the same situation. On the level of literary structure, the "one object" indicates the line itself that contains "both grief and joy," the sonnet in which the line is contained, the soliloquy that contains both sonnet and line, and finally the entire drama encapsulates characters' fluctuating responses of joy

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<sup>176</sup> Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, ed. Stephanie Hodgson-Wright (Ontario: Broadview, 2000).

and grief over Herod's reported death. The "one object" reveals narrative ambiguity from the female body and disunity between Mariam's external and internal state.

The disunity of Mariam's body authors a chaotic structure for the play. Characters are unsure of what to do in the absence of Herod's patriarchal authority but also look toward Mariam for answers. However, Mariam's body, a text that others try to read, problematizes reading strategies that desire a stable narrative in the wake of trauma. This is most evident when Mariam's mother and sister-in-law visit Mariam upon first news of Herod's death. As Act One, Scene 1 closes, Mariam demands that her "tears fly back" because if her mother sees them, she would read them as a sign of Mariam's mourning (1.1.75). Mariam is right. Her mother Alexandra reads Mariam's tears as ones of grief, and she scorns her daughter: "What, weep'st thou for thy brother's murd'rer's sake?" (1.2.3). Yet in the following scene, Mariam's sister-in-law, Salome interprets Mariam's tears as ones of joy, proclaiming that "Mariam's eyes do sparkle joy for Herod's death" (1.3.4). Alexandra and Salome, despite their contradictory interpretations of Mariam's tears, both flag Mariam as "one object who yields both grief and joy" (1.1.10). Her body exudes two different narratives.

Another moment when Mariam's fluctuating body structures the play is in Act Three, Scene Two, when Salome and Pheroras learn of Herod's return from the grave:

SALOME: How can my joy sufficiently appear?  
PHERORAS: A heavier tale did never pierce mine ear.  
SALOME: Now Salome of happiness may boast.  
PHERORAS: But now Pheroras is in danger most.  
SALOME: I shall enjoy the comfort of my life.  
PHERORAS: And I shall lose it, losing of my wife.  
SALOME: Joy, heart, for Constabarus shall be slain!

PHERORAS: Grieve, soul, Graphina shall from me be ta'en!  
SALOME: Smile, cheeks, the fair Silleus shall be mine!  
PHERORAS: Weep, eyes, for I must with a child combine! (3.2.19-28)

Salome and Pheroras's exchange, which creates a set of strife-inflicted and chaotic couplets, mirror the "one object" that produces multiple narratives. Salome and Pheroras's couplets produce disparate actions as a result of the one "heavier tale" of Herod's return from the grave. Their couplets also dramatize Mariam's opening soliloquy, operating in synecdoche for Mariam—Salome acts as Mariam's "joy" while Pheroras takes on the role of her "grief." Each of the five couplets is "one object" that produces contradictory meaning, despite having stylistically identical and parallel lines. For instance, when Salome exclaims, "Joy, heart, for Constabarus shall be slain!," Pheroras responds with a lament, "Grieve, soul, Graphina shall from me be ta'en!" Salome asks her "heart" to "joy" over her spouse's impending death. In contrast, Pheroras directs his "soul" to "grieve" for losing his beloved fiancé. Finally, Salome and Pheroras conclude their couplets by commanding their bodies to react physically to Herod's return. "Smile, cheeks," implores Salome; Pheroras pleads, "weep, eyes." Salome and Pheroras's closing couplet alludes to Mariam's own joyful, yet sorrowful bodily reaction to Herod's death.

Mariam's most flagrant demonstration of bodily authorship occurs upon Herod's return, presenting her body as a material expression of her dissent from Herod. Up until this moment, Mariam has wavered in a simultaneous mourning and celebration, but when Mariam first appears to Herod upon his return to Jerusalem, she has put on clothes of mourning. Herod questions Mariam's outfit. Mariam should be relieved to see Herod;

instead, she is dressed for a funeral. “My lord, I suit my garment to my mind, / And there no cheerful colours can I find,” explains Mariam (4.3.5-6). This response presents Herod and readers both with a new Mariam who has united her mind and body, materializing her discontent; Cary’s poetics reinforces Mariam’s decision as Mariam’s response is a rhyming couplet with unified meaning--a rare find within *The Tragedy of Mariam*. Even the shared-couplets of Salome and Pheroras, discussed above, are mismatched in content and form.

Mariam’s funeral garb reflects more than her mourning; it also shows a blatant disregard for Herod’s authority as husband. One, Mariam no longer allows Herod to direct her thoughts--to be the head of the household. Mariam assumes control of her body *and* mind. Just as early modern authorship was often built upon the female body, early modern husbandly authority was built upon a wife’s subordinate and yielding body. Early modern theories of marriage cast husbands as the mind and wives as the body; two became one, but the relationship was not egalitarian. Women were subsumed under their husbands--in terms of legal and monetary status as well as domestic status. Seventeenth-century preacher Robert Cleaver depicts the household as “a little commonwealth” under proper supervision and governance by the husband. For Cleaver, this relationship is God-ordained and mirrors the church’s relationship to Christ. “As the Church should depend upon the wisdom, discretion and will of Christ, and not follow what itself listeth, so must the wife also submit and apply herself to the discretion and will of her husband” because, as Cleaver writes, “the government and conduct of everything resteth in the head, not in

the body.”<sup>177</sup> The Chorus in *The Tragedy of Mariam* points to this unstated law, as the Chorus ponders Mariam’s crimes:

When to their husbands they themselves do bind,  
Do they not wholly give themselves away?  
Or give they but their body not their mind,  
Reserving that, though best, for others, pray?  
No sure, their thoughts no more can be their own,  
And therefore should to none but one be known. (Chorus 3.19-24)

Cary’s poetics highlight the answer for us, as she rhymes “bind” and “mind.” The wife’s thoughts are no longer hers or anyone else’s but her husband’s. Thus, when Mariam dresses in “dusky habits,” she publicizes her internal disregard of her husband for everyone to see.

Two, Mariam breaks from a patriarchal culture that demands female dissemblance. In encouraging wives to give over their minds to their husbands, patriarchal models of marriage unintentionally create space for a wife’s dissemblance. William Gouge’s *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622) demonstrates how early modern patriarchal structure implored dissemblance from women:

A wives outward reverence towards her husband is a manifestation of her inward due respect of him. Now then seeing the intent of the heart, and inward disposition cannot be discerned by man simply in it selfe, that the husband may know his wives good affection towards him, it is behouevfull that she manifest the same by her outward reverence.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>Hodgson-Wright, ed., *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Appendix B., 168.

<sup>178</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), Tr3.

If her thoughts veer from those of her husband's, then the wife should at least make her "outward reverence" shown by her actions and physical appearance. Such external affection "provides [the] husband with epistemological surety" and, moreover, with ontological certainty.<sup>179</sup> In this husband-wife model, the female body reflects male wishes and desires; it is a way for the husband to "write" the wife's body, to create and mold as if it were a male's text. Stated another way, dissembling wives exist to support a husband's patriarchal authority. Yet by encouraging a wife to make her "inward disposition" known through "outward reverence," Gouge also authorizes, though unwittingly, a wife's duplicity. Implied is that wives may dissemble if it is the best interest of their husbands; external obedience to her husband may not indicate her actual beliefs. In a way, a husband's authority depends upon his wife's dissembling body. If a husband understands that his wife might internally disagree with his desires, then he can at least control what he *sees* and create a material representation of his own desires.

Mariam, however, breaks from Gouge's outlined model. She has united her physical appearance with her "inward disposition" even though it opposes Herod's will, and the only remnant of "outward reverence" is Mariam's obligatory address of Herod as "My lord" (4.3.5). Mariam's body and mind are unified, collectively working to subvert patriarchal stability.<sup>180</sup> Once Mariam ceases to dissemble, Herod can no longer discern Mariam's body--the text that Herod once assumed as his own creation, the one he enters

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<sup>179</sup> Michelle M. Dowd, *Women's Work in Early English Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 125.

<sup>180</sup> See also Heather Ostman, "Backbiters, Flatters, and Monarchs: Domestic Politics in *The Tragedy of Mariam*;" and *Images of Matter: Essays on British Literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, (Newark, DE: U of Delaware P, 2005), 183-205; 195; and Karen Raber, "Gender and the Political Subject in *The Tragedy of Mariam*."

Jerusalem lauding as a Petrarchan mistress.<sup>181</sup> Herod praises Mariam's brightness, demanding that even the sun is muted by Mariam's presence: "Muffle up thy brow, / Thou day's dark taper! Mariam will appear, / And where she shines, we need not thy dim light" (4.1.7-9). Herod also believes that seeing Mariam's face will "cheer the heart of Herod" (4.1.12). But Mariam does not warm Herod's heart; she presents herself in cold colors. That Herod cannot read Mariam as the woman he crafts as his baffles him:

Is this my welcome? Have I longed so much  
To see my dearest Mariam discontent?  
What is't that is the cause thy heart to touch?  
Oh, speak, that I thy sorrow may prevent.  
Art thou not Jewry's queen, and Herod's too? (4.3.7-11).

Unsure of what to make of the female body before him, Herod welcomes dissemblance. He claims that he will overlook Mariam's mourning garments (a reflection of her mind) if only she smile. "Smile, my dearest Mariam, do but smile" (4.3.57), Herod begs. Mariam simply responds, "I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught / My face a look dissenting from my thoughts" (4.3.59-60). Although Mariam knows that she could "enchain [Herod] with a smile," but she "scorns" that her "look should ever man beguile" (3.3.45; 47). Mariam rewrites Herod's script, pledging her allegiances and love to family rather than husband.

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<sup>181</sup> Ilona Bell convincingly argues for Cary's critique of Petrarchanism and the lyric tradition, in "Private Lyrics in Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*," *The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680*, Ed. Heather Wolfe, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 17-34. Discussing Herod's love poetry, Bell writes, "Herod's unexpected tenderness and remarkable generosity, his genuine attentiveness to Mariam's feelings, his attempt to elicit smiles and loving words, all recall the happiest moments in *Astrophil and Stella*, *Amoretti*, or *Songs and Sonnets*. ...Having vowed to deny Herod his marital due, Mariam turns herself into a conventional Petrarchan lady, cold but virtuous, and thus condemns Herod to play the role of the unrequited Petrarchan lover" (27-28; 28).

What happens shortly after Mariam's assertion of authority can only be described as a chaotic spiral of events that leads to Mariam's execution. How does this happen so fast? The prevailing theory among scholars is that the escalation of events results from Mariam's "spoken defiance of Herod."<sup>182</sup> Catherine Belsey further postulates, "It is because she has *not* given her mind to a tyrant (because she is a unified, autonomous subject) that Mariam remains innocent and meets her death with heroism."<sup>183</sup> I contend, however, that Mariam's execution has more to do with what Belsey has relegated to parentheses than to Mariam's actual speech: "because she is a unified, autonomous subject," one whose mind and body are unified, Mariam dies. Mariam, for once, is outspoken in her disdain for Herod, revealing her external expression to be unified with her internal state. Mariam's unification of external and internal—body and mind—produces a new female ontology that has no place in Herod's kingdom or early modern patriarchal social structures. She violates the unstated agreement that a wife should dissemble her husband if it should please him. Mariam is only concerned with her own appeasement. Thus, Herod's execution of Mariam becomes a way of making sure that the female body stays literally dis-unified as "her body is divided from her head" (5.1.90). Herod can write the wife's body that he desires.

Watching the punishment of a unified female body seems problematic, for it implies that women's bodily authority cannot exist in early modern patriarchal discourses--that patriarchal authority demands dismemberment. However, Mariam's

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<sup>182</sup> Belsey, 173; see also Ostman, 185.

<sup>183</sup> Belsey, 173.



death and her dismembered body, ironically enough, are moments of productive narrative birth that causes patriarchal instability. Instead of reinforcing patriarchal structures, Mariam's beheaded body operates as a destructive force that authors new narratives of chaste innocence and her royalty within Jewish history.

In Act Five of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Cary attends to the female body as an authorizing force of new narratives. Nuntio relates the death of Mariam to Herod while Herod mourns his wife, dead by his word. Mariam, here, is the silent body, speechless in public though she "with public voice r[a]n on" from the play's outset (1.1.1). Yet her voiceless body still produces a narrative through Nuntio's relation of the story and Herod's response to it. Like a tacit Petrarchan mistress, Mariam authorizes Herod's pain and becomes the agent for his change of the narrative of her life and death. Mariam's death stacks her royal authority, which she has via blood, against Herod's tyranny. Cary reminds readers that Herod "crept" into Jewish royalty by marrying Mariam, and that "Herod in his wife's right had the best title" (The Argument 1, 8). Furthermore, Mariam's story is reminiscent of popular martyrologies, such as Anne Askew, and legends of English queens, like Anne Boleyn and Lady Jane Grey, who transgressed a king's law, and were beheaded.<sup>184</sup>

Cary even emphasizes attention to the act of story-making and narrative. "Tell no dying-tale," Herod urges Nuntio (5.1.17). Although Herod's word has ended Mariam's life, he hopes Nuntio will not confirm it by repeating the tale of death. Still Nuntio

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<sup>184</sup> For a discussion of Mariam alongside such stories see Frances E. Dolan, "Gentlemen, I Have One Thing More to Say": Women on Scaffolds in England, 1563-1680," *Modern Philology* 92.2 (1994): 157-78. Dolan comments that "beheading was the most privileged means of death, reserved for traitorous aristocrats and adulterous queens as relatively quick and dignified, and meted out by royal prerogative" (164)..

continues. He speaks of Mariam's body on the scaffold: her "stately" behavior, fortitude, and "her look [that] did seem to keep the world in awe" (5.1.26, 27) and how she approached execution wearing a "stately habit," "cheerful face," and dry eyes despite the crowd's tears. (5.1.57). At Herod's behest, Nuntio recalls the final encounter between Mariam and her mother. Herod, angry that Alexandra should debase his beautiful Mariam, swears that future accounts of history will erase Alexandra's one claim to glory, which is being Mariam's mother: "Base pick-thank devil! Shame? 'Twas all her glory, / That she to noble Mariam was the mother! / But never hall it live in any story / Her name, except to infamy, I'll smother?" (5.1.45-48). Herod demands that Nuntio tell him how Mariam responded to Alexandra's derision. Mariam gives no verbal rebuttal but retaliates through bodily rhetoric. Mariam "smiled a dutiful, though scornful smile" (5.1.52). This smile is an act of defiant obedience, both to her mother and to Herod. Alexandra once chastised Mariam for crying rather than rejoicing over Herod's death. Herod, too, begs Mariam to smile and exchange her "dusky habits" for colorful garments (4.3.4), but she refuses. She knows how to use her body, once remarking to Sohemus, "I know I could enchain him [Herod] with a smile / And lead him captive with gentle word. / I scorn my look should ever man beguile, / Or other speech, than meaning to afford" (3.3.45-48). In her death, Mariam uses her looks to defy rather than obey Herod. She understands that her body is a public text read by Herod and others, but more importantly that she authors her body, doing what she will with it. Herod's word may have sent her to the scaffold, but she writes the details of that death.

And Herod hangs upon Mariam's every word. He frantically requests that Nuntio "[t]ell all, omit no letter," for Herod needs to hear all of Mariam's final speech. Herod does not want Mariam to be a voiceless body. Silence is its own brand of authority and can be dangerous. As Pheroras asks Graphina, "Why speakest thou not fair creature? Move thy tongue, / For silence is a sign of discontent" (2.1.41-42).<sup>185</sup> Herod needs Mariam to speak because silence represents her discontentment with him and, worse, death. Thus, he is ecstatic to learn that Mariam's last words were a message to Herod: "Tell thou my lord, said she--" Nuntio cannot finish because Herod interrupts his tale, hoping to extend Mariam's life by extending her death narrative. When Nuntio finishes his tale, then Mariam's life has finally ended:

NUNTIO: Tell thou my lord, said she--  
 HEROD: Me, meant she me?  
           Is't true? The more my shame, I was her lord,  
           Were I not made her lord, I still should be,  
           But now her name must be by me adored.  
           Oh say, what said she more? Each word she said  
           Shall be the food whereon my heart is fed.  
 NUNTIO: Tell thou my lord thou sawst me lose my breath.  
 HEROD: Oh that I could that sentence now control! (5.1.67-74)

Herod lives upon Mariam's words, his sustenance coming from her mouth. Cary's poetics reveal Herod's dependence on Mariam. He finishes Nuntio's line, "said she," with a question, "Me, meant she me?," a repetitive and internal rhyme that echoes

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<sup>185</sup> Miranda Garo Nesler, "Closeted Authority in *The Tragedy of Mariam*," *SEL* 52.2 (2012): 363-385, analyzes this conversation between Pheroras and Graphina and presents Graphina as an author, who "emphasizes closet drama and the effective female authorship and acting it allows" (365). Reading the lovers' dialogue, Nesler proposes that "Graphina can not only shape Pheroras's reading [of her] but also their narrative. No longer is he the poet-lover and she the blazoned mistress; now he is the listener and she is the stronger reader and narrator. She uses such performance to author them both" (374).

Herod's need for Mariam. Furthermore, Cary places a pun on the word "sentence." At once Herod wants to "control" Mariam's final spoken sentence, Nuntio's repeating of that sentence, and also his own erroneous death sentence of Mariam. Herod even might be recalling his request that Mariam smile for him, since she finally smiles once on the scaffold. The multiple referents to "sentence" indicate that Mariam's body is free of Herod, who no longer has authority over it. Though Herod demands more of Nuntio's "tale," he cannot hear more of Mariam's voice. She says a "silent prayer" before gracefully meeting her beheading, a punishment that dis-unifies the body. This is what Herod wanted, but ironically it gives more power to Mariam.

Mariam's authority lies within her decapitated body. Herod casts Mariam as a Petrarchan mistress even more so after her death, delivering a lengthy blazon on Mariam's "smoothest brow," "fair" skin, unbelievably white hands, precious smile and radiant eyes (5.1.143-185). Ilona Bell writes, "Like Petrarch's love for Laura, Herod's devotion to Mariam is intensified and magnified by her death...but his Petrarchanizing seems bitterly ironic--the death knoll for a tradition that objectifies and disembodies the woman it admires and desires from an unattainable distance."<sup>186</sup> Herod's blazon metaphorically disembodies Mariam even after he literally disfigures her body. Moreover, Mariam is ultimately unattainable, lying in the grave, dead and no longer under Herod's rule. Mariam may be a Petrarchan mistress, but not an agent-less one.

Herod loses poetic license over his wife's corpse. Unable to accept the true story that he murdered his chaste wife, Herod turns to Nuntio for an artistic miracle: "sure rare

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<sup>186</sup> Bell, 29.

things are done / By an inventive head, and willing heart” (5.1.92-93). Nuntio, however, warns him, “Let not, my lord, let your fancies run wild” (5.2.94). Herod wishes his inventive, poetic praise of Mariam could resuscitate her. In the aftermath of his authoritative execution of Mariam, Herod wants her alive once more, so that that Nuntio could “call her” to Herod and “bid her now / Put on fair habit, stately ornament, / And let no frown o’erhade her smoothest brow, / In her doth Herod place his whole content” (5.1.141-144). Of course, Nuntio reminds Herod that Mariam is dead at his request: “She’ll come in stately weeds to please your sense, / If now she come attired in robe of heaven. / Remember you yourself did send her hence, / And now to you she can no more be given” (5.1.145-148). The only way Herod can see Mariam is to see her dressed up corpse.

Mariam’s corpse authors Herod’s kingly and bodily destruction. Herod needs to reconstruct Mariam in order to sustain his stability and authority. When he cannot do that, he sentences himself to death. He writes Mariam as a virtuous wife and rightful heir to Jerusalem’s throne and himself into history as a villain. First, he acknowledges Mariam’s chastity and requests “pardon” from Mariam, the “pure unspotted ghost!” (5.1.114-115) despite once believing the dominant, slanderous narrative of Mariam’s murderous, treasonous plot to poison him and take his crown. Second, he addresses Jerusalem and wonders why his subjects do not take up a sword and kill him. Herod reminds them, “’Tis I have overthrown your royal line,” polluting the bloodline (5.1.178). Finally, Herod seeks death as penance and delivers his last poetic sentence. He authors his own epitaph: ““Here Herod lies, that hath his Mariam slain”” (5.1.258).

## Desdemona's Authorial Grave

Did you imagine me as a wisp of a girl?  
A coddled doll who fell in love with a  
handsome warrior who rode off with  
her under his arm? Is it your final summation of  
me that I was a foolish naïf who surrendered  
to her husband's brutality because she had  
no choice? Nothing could be more false.  
--Toni Morrison, *Desdemona*<sup>187</sup>

Quite like Mariam's execution, Desdemona's murder often leaves readers reeling.

Unsure of how to comprehend her final moments, audiences are simultaneously heartbroken, bewildered, and infuriated at both Desdemona and Othello, and they potentially feel betrayed at Desdemona's lack of resistance. It seems that Desdemona easily succumbs to Othello's murderous hands. Even when she briefly resuscitates, Desdemona puzzles audiences, Emilia, and Othello with her paradoxical accusations:

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| DESDEMONA: | O, falsely, falsely murder'd!  |
| EMILIA:    | [O Lord], what cry is that?  |
| OTHELLO:   | That? what?  |
| EMILIA:    | Out, and alas, that was my lady's voice. Help, help, ho help! O lady, speak again! Sweet Desdemona, O sweet mistress, speak! |
| DESDEMONA: | A guiltless death I die.   |
| EMILIA:    | O, who hath done this deed?  |
| DESDEMONA: | Nobody; I myself. Farewell! Commend me to my kind lord. O farewell! (5.2.117-125). <sup>188</sup>                            |

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<sup>187</sup> Toni Morrison, *Desdemona*, London: Oberon Books, 2012.

<sup>188</sup> All citations of Shakespeare's *Othello* and any other Shakespeare plays are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997.

After Desdemona's self-erasing death moan, her corpse lies upon the marital sheets that double as her deathbed and remains on stage for all to gaze upon and ponder. Her body resuscitated, on the white wedding sheets, Desdemona resembles a revenge ghost. Othello is shocked at her voice, denies the charges that he was her murderer, and at first agrees with Desdemona's self-immolating sentence. When Emilia asks who murdered her, Desdemona replies, "Nobody; I myself. Farewell! / Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell!" (5.2.124-125). In her final breath, Desdemona plays the virtuous, obedient, and loyal wife. Desdemona's speech is a crime against wives. Onlookers are left with the tricky business of ascribing agency to Desdemona. Othello confesses murder shortly after and commits suicide as an act of contrition for his miscalculations and lack of faith in Desdemona. Othello climbs on the bed with the dead Desdemona and Emilia. End scene.

As Toni Morrison challenges in her 2008 play, *Desdemona*, "Nothing could be more false." Morrison's Desdemona adds a deeper complexity to the popular story of the jealous husband and victimized wife. Let us, then, consider a different story--one in which Shakespeare's Desdemona contains just as much agency as Morrison imagines she does. In this section, I exhume Desdemona's corpse and uncover a narrative of female agency and authorship that exists throughout *Othello* despite Iago's slanderous narrative of adultery that overshadows it and sends Desdemona to the grave. Desdemona may die innocently, but her corpse prompts Othello to revise and refashion the dominating narrative of cuckoldry in which Iago has placed him and Desdemona. Far from being lifeless, Desdemona's corpse generates narrative life within the tragedy. Desdemona's corpse authors.

As much as Iago controls the direction of the play, writing it impromptu, Desdemona, too, demonstrates herself as an authorial figure, although seeing Desdemona as author requires piecing a puzzle together. That Shakespeare does not develop Desdemona's story nor her "character in response to her husband's obsessive jealousy, at least not much further than as a general state of bewilderment" leaves Mark Breitenberg frustrated, yet he insists that "this omission does not consign us to repeating her silenced position in our analysis of the play."<sup>189</sup> Breitenberg demonstrates a reading practice that opposes the play's dominant viewpoint; whereas the male characters dismiss Emilia and her "keen observations" about jealousy, Breitenberg chooses to "listen to Emilia."<sup>190</sup> He initiates a new scholarly narrative that welcomes alternative readings. Likewise, I provide an analysis that attends to Desdemona's role as author, and I argue that her dead body creates new narratives that Othello, fellow Venetians, and readers cannot ignore.

Understanding Desdemona and her corpse as authorial figures demands a review of the dominant, patriarchal model of authorship found within *Othello*. Scholars have long championed Iago as ultimate playwright.<sup>191</sup> Iago's creation of his slanderous narrative of Desdemona's infidelity relies upon a patriarchal model of early modern authorship in which the man authors a female text--men become creators and women

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<sup>189</sup> Mark Breitenberg, "Ocular Proof: Sexual Jealousy and the Anxiety of Interpretation" in *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996), 175-201; 197.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> In *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A.C. Bradley writes, "Iago...is not simply a man of action; he is an artist. His action is a plot, the intricate plot of a drama, and in the conception and execution of it he experiences the tension and the joy of artistic creation" (230-231); A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Macmillan, 1905. See also, Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980): Iago is someone who "construct[s] a narrative into which he inscribes ('by this hand') those around him" (234).



their creations.<sup>192</sup> Iago fashions Desdemona's body as he pleases in order to prompt particular reactions out of each man in the play--Roderigo, Brabantio, Cassio, and Othello. As will later be shown, Iago first crafts Desdemona as a whorish woman who authorizes her own sexual pleasure and then as a passive woman who is to be had by men--an object stolen from Brabantio, an object that Roderigo can buy, and an object that Othello cannot control.

Scholarship, likewise, has not been exempt from Iago's machinations. While we pride ourselves on seeing beyond Iago's lies, we are still sometimes blinded by his fashioning of Desdemona as a tragic woman. In other words, we buy into Iago's tragic narrative as much as Othello does. We know that Iago's narrative will lead to Desdemona's murder. Desdemona becomes a walking corpse. In reading the play again, we retroactively believe that Desdemona has very little agency. Any demonstration of self-will or subjectivity is overshadowed by her inevitable murder. I, however, seek to restore Desdemona's life by uncovering the narrative of female authorship that highlights female agency throughout *Othello*, despite Iago's attempt to bury it as he does Desdemona.

To trace Desdemona's agency, I start paradoxically with Desdemona's corpse. Desdemona's corpse is a paradox because she is both dead and alive: she calls out that she has been murdered. Her brief resuscitation and final self-immolating statement, "Nobody; I myself," is frustratingly enigmatic. "I myself" is a strong declaration of self-will, but preceding it is "no-body," an empty, hollow pronoun that possibly is a pun on

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<sup>192</sup> Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993).

women's role in early modern marriage: her body is not hers, but her husband's. The Chorus of *The Tragedy of Mariam* implies such, as we have seen. Either Desdemona lies to shift blame away from Othello or, as scholars have suggested, she takes the marriage vow too seriously. She literally becomes absorbed by Othello. Othello (I) kills Desdemona (myself).<sup>193</sup> Desdemona has no agency; her subjectivity is wrapped up in Othello. Another way to read "No-body" is to see it as Desdemona's clever remark that her body belongs to no-one.

The very mysterious nature of Desdemona's final words gives her agency. Her death is her final but the most powerful moment of authorship as it reveals the true narrative of her fidelity to correct the false one that led to her death. Rather than Desdemona being the disloyal wife, Othello becomes the disloyal husband. His brutal stabbing of himself and his movement to the wedding bed, marring it with blood, confirm that marital infidelity is his fault. "Nobody. I myself" provides the script for Othello's suicide. His speech and subsequent stabbing revise the dominant narrative that carried the audience up to this moment. Othello's suicide speech dictates to the bedroom audience (as well as the theater's audience) the true story that he wants retold in Venice: "Set you down this." Again, though, the story is fueled by Desdemona's corpse that cannot be hidden from the audience. Her lifeless body forces Othello to explain himself:<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Eamon Grennan, "The Women's Voice in 'Othello': Speech, Song, Silence," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38.3 (1987): 275-292; 290.

<sup>194</sup> In an article proposing Desdemona as a Virgin Mary figure and agency through Mariological will, Greg Mailet states that "It is, of course, the play's main death scene wherein Desdemona's most important act of intercession on behalf of Othello occurs" (107). Through her association with Mary, Desdemona offers a form of salvation for Othello. See, "Desdemona and The Mariological Theology of the Will in Othello,"

I pray you, in your letters,  
 When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
 Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,  
 Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak  
 Of one that lov'd not wisely but too well;  
 Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,  
 Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand  
 (Like the base [Indian]) threw a pearl away  
 Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdu'd eyes,  
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
 Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
 Their medicinable gum. Set you down this;  
 And say besides, that in Aleppo once,  
 Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk  
 Beat a Venetian and traduc'd the state,  
 I took by th' throat the circumcised dog,  
 And smote him--thus. (5.2.340-356).

Othello proves himself to be a craftsman of story, reverting back to mode of exotic romance that once won Desdemona's heart. He invents numerous similes, all of which are set in foreign lands except for the final scenario where the romance threatens the home front: the "malignant and turban'd Turk" who seeks to overturn Venice. Othello's final story of a warring Turk and Venetian figuratively describes Othello's suicide, and it also echoes Desdemona's final words, "I, myself." Desdemona's words are the foundation for Othello's final metaphor. The "O bloody period" that Lodovico says upon Othello's death brings an end to the story, an end to *Othello*.<sup>195</sup> Othello's will is that

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*Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama*, ed. Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 87-110.

<sup>195</sup> As Jennifer Feather notes, "his greatest concern is how he will be presented, betraying his preoccupation with unifying his body and his social identity. He authenticates the narrative that he suggests...by stabbing himself" (255-256). Furthermore, "The 'bloody period' ensures that Othello's identity is fixed in his actions. He uses a bloody deed to tie the narrative of his identity to his physical person" (256). Jennifer Feather, "'O Blood, Blood, Blood': Violence and Identity in Shakespeare's *Othello*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism, and Reviews* 26 (2013): 240-263.

future audiences know of his love for Desdemona and not his jealous rage. He attempts to make this story, his story. Yet, Desdemona's corpse is the true "ocular proof" of the play's narrative.

"Nobody; I myself." Desdemona's final words not only express authorial agency, but the paradox contained within illuminates the larger paradox of the play: the diminishing of Desdemona's agency from start to end. The woman who exudes a subjectivity of "I myself." dwindles to "Nobody." If *Othello* traces the overt tragedy of its hero's fall from beloved Venetian-war hero to murderous outsider, then the hidden tragedy is Desdemona's unlikely and surprising transformation from the adventurous Venetian woman who collaborates with her lover to marry him surreptitiously to the obedient wifely martyr who accepts death at her husband's hands. Desdemona has the potential to be another witty Rosalind of Arden who shares the act of wooing; her contemporary Venetian counterpart, Juliet, who commits suicide for love but does so on her own terms; or even the stoic Mariam, discussed in the last section, who valiantly embraces beheading. Even in the gruesome display of violence perpetrated upon Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia's death contains glimmers of agency, as some have argued.<sup>196</sup> As Juliet, Mariam, and Lavinia demonstrate, tragic ends for women do not necessarily indicate a loss of agency. Desdemona's death, however, seemingly re-affirms that she is a passive victim of an angered, jealous husband. But, in Desdemona's case, the

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<sup>196</sup> For scholarship on Lavinia's agency see, Bethany Packard, "Lavinia as Coauthor of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *Studies in English Literature* 50.2 (2010): 281-300; and Emily Detmer-Goebel, "The Need for Lavinia's Voice: *Titus Andronicus* and the Telling of Rape," *Shakespeare Studies* 29 (2001): 75-92. Marguerite A. Tassi, *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare: Gender, Genre, and Ethics* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna UP, 2011): Lavinia although viewed in "terms of an appalling victimization, can be seen, surprisingly, as avengers when understood as protagonists within their own vengeance narratives" (21).

end signals the beginning. Starting at the end of her life, “Nobody,” I retroactively recount Desdemona’s narrative of female authorship and agency in the face of her inevitable death.

In scholarship, Desdemona’s role as author remains subordinate to Othello’s tragedy. One scholar heralds Othello’s story as the “grand narrative” and Desdemona’s as “a bawdy novella.”<sup>197</sup> Desdemona’s story serves Othello’s. Desdemona leaves the privileged life of Venice behind, “where her own life narrative is already scripted, to enter, as it were, Othello’s narrative, to dwell in his heroic aura, to witness his legend in the making.”<sup>198</sup> And quite literally, “when Othello wooed her with his life story, she pitied his hardships. Now she earns a place in the story through service, like a squire’s of a knight.”<sup>199</sup> At most Desdemona gets nominated for best supporting role while Othello takes home best actor in leading role.

Despite Desdemona’s subordinate status, her body is at the heart of authorship in *Othello*. Ultimately, Iago creates the whorish Desdemona. She does not innately exist as such. In Iago’s story, Desdemona is a blank page upon which he can write men’s worst fears. He makes her transgress many patriarchal ideologies by positioning her both as a passive object and the author of her own actions. For Roderigo, Iago positions Desdemona as a product to be bought or a “guinea hen” not worth killing oneself over, as

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<sup>197</sup> Ronald J. Boling, “Desdemona’s Venetian Agency,” *Philological Review* 34.1 (2008): 1-34,10. See also, Monica Beckner Robison, Othello’s storytelling is a way to shape his identity and future and his relationship with Desdemona. Robison, Monica Beckner, “The Power of Words: Othello as Storyteller,” *Storytelling, Self, Society* 7 (2011): 63-71.

<sup>198</sup> Boling., 2.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 6.

Roderigo threatens to do, yet Iago also gives agency to Desdemona when he casts her as a fickle woman whose insatiable appetite will eventually tire of Othello and thus will turn to another man (1.3.315). When Roderigo declares Desdemona incapable of such indecency because of her “blessed” nature, Iago balks, “Bless’d pudding! Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand?” (2.1.253-254). Iago, fully knowing that Desdemona and Cassio’s handholding is innocent, casts Desdemona as too welcoming and places her, grammatically, as the subject who is doing the action. For Cassio, Iago implies Desdemona is sexually active: “she is sport for Jove,” “full of game,” and her very voice is “an alarum for love.” (2.3.17, 19, 26-27). Iago even draws out from Cassio that Desdemona has an “inviting eye” (2.3.24). Her body welcomes men’s embraces. Desdemona can also restore men’s embraces. As Iago suggests, she is the conduit through which Cassio can regain Othello’s favor. Desdemona’s body is at the center of Iago’s every move; Iago needs Desdemona’s body for his plots to flourish.

Iago especially extorts the patriarchal model of authorship in his presentation of Desdemona to Brabantio and Othello. Iago refers to Desdemona as a jewel stolen from Brabantio and a bodily vessel through which Othello ruins Brabantio’s patrilineage. Iago awakens Brabantio in the night, exclaiming, “Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tugging your white ewe...the devil will make a grandsire of you” (1.1.88-91). He conjures images of bestiality and implicitly connects Desdemona and Brabantio through his rhyme of “white ewe” with “a grandsire of you.” In Iago’s story, Othello corrupts Desdemona *and* Brabantio. Iago implies that Othello’s sex with Desdemona indirectly rapes Brabantio and makes him an unwilling grandfather. What happens to Desdemona

also happens to Brabantio. Doubly heinous sex acts occur. Another facet of Iago's story is Desdemona's willful participation in this bestial marriage. He tells Brabantio that Othello and Desdemona are "making the beast with two backs" (1.1.116-117), and Desdemona's "gross revolt" (Roderigo's words) will deliver more beasts (1.1.134) to defame Brabantio's lineage: "you'll have your daughter cover'd with a Barbary horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins and gennets for germans" (1.1.111-113). Iago establishes a narrative of familial, national, and racial corruption through improper copulation that is made visible through heirs. Thus, Brabantio, nor any father, should "trust...daughters' minds" because the female mind is impenetrable (1.1.170). Men can only rely on a woman's outward actions, the "ocular proof" of her thoughts (3.3.360).

Of course, it is "ocular proof" that Othello demands from Iago, when Iago besmirches Desdemona's reputation. Othello ultimately succumbs to Iago's positioning of Desdemona as both object and agent. In one of the most climatic moments between Othello and Desdemona, Othello employs the model of male author / female text. Standing before Desdemona, Othello asks, "Was this fair paper, this most goodly book, / Made to write 'whore' upon?" (4.2.71-72). The "fair paper," Desdemona's skin, is marred, and "her name that was as fresh / As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black / as [Othello's] own face" (3.3.386-388). Othello casts Desdemona as a book made

common through wide circulation, an on-stage reference to the gendered conditions of printing and elitist fears about the corruption of poetry by vulgar readership.<sup>200</sup>

Desdemona becomes a “whore” in Othello’s mind not simply because of Iago’s slander but more specifically, because Iago makes Othello believe that Desdemona is self-authorizing of her actions and relationships. Cassio is never to blame; rather Desdemona invites Cassio’s advances. Iago convinces Othello of “An unauthorized kiss!” between Desdemona and Cassio:

IAGO: Will you think so?  
OTHELLO: Think so, Iago?  
IAGO: What,  
to kiss in private?  
OTHELLO: An unauthoriz’d kiss!  
IAGO: Or to be naked with her friend in bed  
An hour, or more, not meaning any harm?  
OTHELLO: Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm?  
It is hypocrisy against the devil.  
They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,  
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.  
IAGO: If they do nothing, ’tis a venial slip;  
But if I give my wife a handkerchief--  
OTHELLO: What then?  
IAGO: Why then ’tis hers, my lord, and being hers,  
She may, I think, bestow’t on any man.  
OTHELLO: She is protectress of her honor too;  
May she give that?  
IAGO: Her honor is an essence that’s not seen;  
They have it very oft that have it not.  
But for the handkerchief--  
OTHELLO: By heaven, I would most gladly forgot it.  
Thou saidst (O, it comes o’er my memory,  
As doth the raven o’er the infectious house,  
Boding to all) he had my handkerchief 4.1.1-22

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<sup>200</sup> Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993).



Iago works this discourse into a narrative of authorized acts--who has agency to do what, when, and where--and guides Othello from general discussion to specific references to Desdemona and Cassio. Moving from the "private kiss," which Othello decries as "unauthorized," Iago remarks that there is no harm in laying "naked with her friend in bed, / An hour, or more" (4.1.3-4). For Othello, innocent nakedness is inconceivable. To be "naked in bed...and not mean harm" is an open door for vice. From here, Iago moves onward to the handkerchief, surmising that "if I give my wife a handkerchief...then 'tis hers" to give to "any man." This enrages Othello, who immediately associates the handkerchief with the wife's honor, and recalls the implanted memory of Cassio holding Desdemona's handkerchief. Othello makes dramatic leaps from kiss to naked body to handkerchief to marital infidelity. The unauthorized kiss immediately becomes associated in Othello's mind with Desdemona's handkerchief because of Iago's first relation that Cassio's possesses it. Iago asks Othello if he has ever seen "a handkerchief / Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?" (3.3.434-435). When Othello affirms, Iago notifies Othello that he saw earlier that day "Cassio wipe his beard with it" (3.3.439). What Othello remembers in Act 4, then, is not just that Cassio has Desdemona's handkerchief, but that he has taken her *hand*-kerchief and has placed it to his mouth in a gesture that evokes the kissing of Desdemona's hand and by association, her lips. Desdemona tarnishes the marital act of giving her hand in marriage. That Othello's distorted logic leaps from handholding to lovemaking has an early modern context, for hand-holding often symbolized sexual contact. Romeo and Juliet first spark their courtship via hands, sexualizing and spiritualizing them into holy palmer's hands--"For saints have hands that

pilgrims' hand do touch, / And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss" (1.5.99-100). The thought of Desdemona's handkerchief in Cassio's hands only gives credence to Othello's paranoid ramblings over Desdemona's "moist" hands, "young and sweating devil[s] that are a physical indication of her "fruitfulness and liberal heart" (3.4.38-43). Othello informs Desdemona that "The hearts of old gave hands; / But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts" (3.4.46-47). Desdemona gives away her hand and body just as liberally as she gives away her handkerchief.

The falsely constructed image of Cassio kissing Desdemona (via wiping his beard and lips with her handkerchief) sends Othello into epileptic shock. "It is not words that shakes me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips. Is't possible? Confess? Handkerchief? O devil!" (4.1.41-43), cries Othello before falling to the floor. Unable to contain Desdemona's body, Othello resorts to disassembling it figuratively, echoing his earlier claims to "tear her all to pieces" and "chop her into messes" (3.3.431; 4.1.200). Othello reverses and literalizes the poetic blazon, placing himself in authorial control of Desdemona's body. Rather than constructing the perfect woman to circulate for other men's admiration and envy, Othello dismembers Desdemona so no other man may be able to possess her.

While Iago's narrative of a sexually active Desdemona dooms her, it also contains within it the notion that Desdemona does have agency. Every part of Iago's story subtly reveals that Desdemona's life is one of storytelling, authority, and romance. Storytelling appears most notably in Othello's courtship of Desdemona. Brabantio introduces Desdemona and Othello by regularly inviting Othello to their house to give account of his

life story--an exotic romance of fights, slavery, cannibalism, and monstrous men.

Although Othello's story reveals much about Othello "romanticizing imagination,"<sup>201</sup> what is truly amazing in Othello's courtship narrative is his characterization of Desdemona:

These things to hear  
Would Desdemona seriously incline;  
But still the house affairs would draw her [thence],  
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,  
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear  
Devour up my discourse.  
.....  
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd  
That heaven had made her such a man. She thank'd me,  
And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,  
I should but teach him how to tell my story,  
And that would woo her. (1.3.145-166).

Desdemona possesses a ravenous appetite for stories, a "greedy ear" that "devours." In love with such stories, Desdemona coyly invites Othello to continue his courting. Like Juliet who rhetorically solicits a kiss from Romeo, and Rosalind who, disguised as Ganymede, instructs Orlando how to woo her, Desdemona woos Othello by participating in the construction of their romance. Although scholars often place Desdemona in the passive role of courted lady and Othello as the main romancer,<sup>202</sup> we must remember that Desdemona's body invites and consumes Othello's stories, reveling in them. Her "greedy ear" woos Othello.

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<sup>201</sup> Mark Rose, "Othello's Occupation: Shakespeare and the Romance of Chivalry," *English Literary Renaissance* 15.3 (1985): 293-311; 294.

<sup>202</sup> Dennis Austin Britton, "Re-'turning' Othello: Transformative and Restorative Romance," *English Literary History* 78.1 (2011): 27-50, see especially 32.

Desdemona's active love of romance has an historical, gendered truth, though much scholarship on romance in *Othello* has focused on Othello's tales rather than Desdemona's interaction with them.<sup>203</sup> While Dennis Austin Britton associates Desdemona with early modern Europeans who contained insatiable, voyeuristic appetites for travel narratives that exposed them to different cultures,<sup>204</sup> I read Desdemona, the Venetian gentlewoman, as using romance to her advantage, actively constructing the romance between her and Othello. Scholars of early modern women's writing frequently note the feminization of the romance genre since women were the primary target audience.<sup>205</sup> Julie Eckerle, most recently, explains that women not only read romances and identified with their female characters and love plots, but also adapted romance motifs in order to construct the self. For Eckerle, "romance provided women with an imaginative and narrative landscape within which to explore and represent personal experience."<sup>206</sup> Othello's relation of his and Desdemona's courtship illuminates an unhappy Desdemona who envisions a life with Othello as an escape from domestic drudgery, which sometimes kept her from hearing Othello's tales, and who desires a

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<sup>203</sup> Mark Rose, n.49 and Britton, n.50, who provides a recent study of the romance genre and *Othello*, as well as a bibliography of past criticism.

<sup>204</sup> Britton, 33; Patricia Parker, "Fantacies of 'Race' and 'Gender': Africa, *Othello* and Bringing to Light," in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, Ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 84-100.

<sup>205</sup> See Julie A. Eckerle, *Romancing the Self in Early Modern Englishwomen's Life Writing* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2013); Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) and Lori Humphrey Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance in Renaissance England," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*. Ed. Corinne Saunders, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 121-139.

<sup>206</sup> Eckerle, 19-20.

relationship with Othello over an arranged marriage with one of the many Venetian suitors who her dominating father has been interviewing. Brabantio voices disdain at Brabantio's pursuit ("My daughter is not for thee") and disbelief that Desdemona "shunn'd / The wealthy curled darlings" of Venice (1.1.98; 1.2.67-68). Desdemona writes herself into a romance with Othello in order to avoid the "arranged marriage[s] and often loveless matches [that] ruled the day."<sup>207</sup> Indeed, if Othello is equipped in chivalric romance language, as Mark Rose suggests, then Desdemona is an active reader of such language.

Reading is its own form of agency. Mary Ellen Lamb, discussing women readers of romance, explains that in romances "sexual and textual pleasures become one."<sup>208</sup> Because of the threat that romance could corrupt virgins and chaste women, many prescriptive extra-literary texts chastised early modern women for listening, reading, and writing romance. Richard Hyde's translation of Juan Vives's *Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1529) popularizes the cultural prohibition on women's engagement with romance, warning that books should be for spiritual edification and that romance. Books of "warre and loue," result in vice (31).<sup>209</sup> Texts like Vives hoped to curtail women's reading of inappropriate texts. Shakespeare himself was criticized for his erotic *Venus and Adonis*, which found itself in the category of inappropriate texts for women readers. Sasha Roberts describes Shakespeare's erotic poem "as a key textbook of female

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>208</sup> Mary Ellen Lamb, "Constructions of Women Readers," *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*, ed. Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hanney (New York: MLA, 2000), 23-34; 31.

<sup>209</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *Instruction of a Christian Woman*. London, 1585.

seduction; part of a young gentlewoman's training in the *ars amandi*.”<sup>210</sup> In one seventeenth-century text by John Johnson, Shakespeare is described “as a closet-creeper: a surrogate lover, a pimp, or perhaps a voyeur,” and “implicates both the author and his woman reader in erotic innuendo.”<sup>211</sup> Romance carried other fears besides just the sexually loose woman: the active reader that turns writer. Lamb argues that whether prescriptive texts reproduced patriarchal ideology in the minds of women or they deterred women from reading romance, such texts “were designed to deny women the independent subjectivity that lies at the core of authorship.”<sup>212</sup> In the thriving print market, authors dedicated their works to women in order to cultivate readership, an action that required printers and authors to imagine women capable of “respond[ing] to texts, to produce meanings from their readings, [and] to criticize the texts they read.”<sup>213</sup> Reading and writing are not inseparable categories. Literacy provides one with the tools of authorship. Women could internalize and reproduce romance on page.

In fact, a substantial sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary history exists between female readers and writers of romance. It is a woman who introduces the first Spanish chivalric romance into England, via translation: Margaret Tyler's *The Mirrour of*

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<sup>210</sup> Roberts, “Shakespeare ‘creepes into the womens closets about bedtime’: Women Reading in a Room of Their Own,” *Renaissance Configurations: Voices/Bodies/Spaces, 1580-1690*, ed. Gordon McMullan (London: Macmillian Press, 1998), 30-63; 46.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 45, 46.

<sup>212</sup> Lamb, 24.

<sup>213</sup> Lamb, 25.

*Princely Deedes and Knighthood* (1578).<sup>214</sup> In her preface, Tyler defends women's relationship with romance and justifies her decision to translate a war-story. Imagining detractors who claim that a good warrior needs experience in battle (as Iago states about Cassio), Tyler remarks in a marginal gloss, "That woman maye write of warre" because "it is not necessary for euery trumpettour or drum[fl]are in the warre to be a good fighter" (A3). Moreover, she hopes readers will agree "that it is all one for a woman to pen a story, as for a man to addresse his story to a woman" (A4v).<sup>215</sup> Just as men can court women through poetry, women can make textual romances.

Many romances were dedicated to women. Two obvious examples are Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and its royal dedicatee, Queen Elizabeth, and Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and its familial dedicatee, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke. These female-directed texts also prompted authorship from women--both historical and fictional. For the *Arcadia*, many men and women writers composed revisions of the *Arcadia*, including mid-seventeenth century Royalist, Anne Weamys (*A Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia*). More notable is Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621), which

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<sup>214</sup> Translation itself combines the acts of reading, analyzing, adapting, and writing, and in Renaissance humanist tradition, it existed as "a culturally authoritative form of literary production." Danielle Clarke, "Translation," *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers, (Cambridge UP, 2009), 167-180; 168. Early modern women's translation has become an important part of authorship studies. Deborah Uman and Belén Bistué, in particular, speak of Margaret Tyler's translation and her role as author and translator in "Translation as Collaborative Authorship: Margaret Tyler's *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 44.3 (2007): 298-323; see also Uman's monograph, *Woman as Translators in Early Modern England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2012). More generally Lori Chamberlain's groundbreaking essay, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," is essential reading for understanding how translation has been gendered feminine and secondary: "the opposition between productive and reproductive work organizes the way a culture values work: this paradigm depicts originality or creativity in terms of paternity and authority, relegating the figure of the female to a variety of secondary roles" (455). Chamberlain, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," *Signs* 13.3 (1988): 454-472.

<sup>215</sup> Margaret Tyler, translator. *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood*, London, 1578.

features a romance-plot similar to her uncle Philip's *Arcadia*. Scholars find Spenser to be an influence on women writers, such as Mary Wroth and Amelia Lanyer, believing Spenser to have "offered authority" and "legitimacy to women beginning to publish their work."<sup>216</sup> Within Spenser's epic romance, the fictional Britomart authors her own narrative of revenge to explain her pursuit of Artegall to Redcrosse. Britomart informs Redcrosse that,

Faire Sir, I let you weete, that from the howre,  
I taken was from nurses tender pap,  
I haue been trained vp in warlike stowre,  
To tossen speare and shield, and to affrap  
The warlike ryder to his most mishap;  
Sithence I loathed haue my life to lead,  
As Ladies wont, in pleasures wanton lap,  
To finger the fine needle and nyce thread;  
Me leuer were with point of foemans speare be dead. (III.ii.6)

Britomart explains that she, like any other knight, seeks "honour" and "high regard" (ii.7.4) and has come to Faerie Land with the sole purpose "to seeke for praise and fame" (ii.7.9). She asks Redcrosse if he knows of a knight named Artegall, who she claims has "donne / Late foule dishonor and reprochfull spight" to her (ii.8.7-9). Here, Britomart presents herself to Redcrosse as a bold woman who shirks a life of prescribed femininity

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<sup>216</sup> Shannon Miller, "'Mirroures More Then One': Edmund Spenser and Female Authority in the Seventeenth Century," *Worldmaking Spenser: Explorations in the Early Modern Age*, eds. Patrick Cheney and Lauren Silberman (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 2000), 125-47; 125. See also, Maureen Quilligan's "Feminine Endings: The Sexual Politics of Sidney's and Spenser's Rhyming, Roberts's 'Radigund Revisited: Perspectives on Women Rulers in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*,'" *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990), 311-26; Jacqueline Miller's "Lady Mary Wroth in the House of Busirane," *Worldmaking Spenser: Explorations in the Early Modern Age*, (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 2000), 115-124; and Susan Woods, "Women at the Margins in Spenser and Lanyer," *Worldmaking Spenser: Explorations in the Early Modern Age*, (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 2000), 101-114.



where she would be confined “to finger the fine needle and nyce thread.” Instead, Britomart pursues a life of a knight and finds the work of a “lady” to be so loathsome that she would rather an enemy kill her with his spear. While Britomart’s origin story is quite empowering in her self-portrait as a woman who assumes knighthood, her origin story is also just that—a story. Britomart lies, weaves a tale, or in Lauren Silberman’s words, exhibits a moment of “fiction-making.”<sup>217</sup> Britomart’s self-ordained knighthood is “a pragmatic means of achieving her desire.”<sup>218</sup> Like Britomart, Desdemona participates in active construction of romance when she breaks from her prescribed life and courts Othello.

Desdemona also shares with Britomart the fact that female agency and sexuality does not always lead to whoredom, despite the web of lies that Iago spins about Desdemona. Women’s dabbling in romance fiercely challenged patriarchal ideology of women’s chastity, especially when women used purified romance. As Lamb explains of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*,

Redeeming the courtly discourse of chivalric narratives with a Protestant approval of appropriate sexual love, Spenser offers his women readers the same sexual virtue as that achieved by Britomart. Like Britomart, who demonstrates her chastity or virtuous love in her quest to find and marry Artegall, women readers are also described in as in possession of a productive rather than a transgressive sexuality.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Lauren Silberman, *Transforming Desire: Erotic Knowledge in Books III and IV of “The Faerie Queene,”* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995), 19.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>219</sup> Lamb, 31.

Similarly, Desdemona has read romance, recognizes it in Othello, and uses it for appropriate aims. When defending her love for Othello, she tells her father and the gathered Venetian officials, “I saw Othello’s visage in his mind, / And to his honors and valiant parts / Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate” (1.3.252-254). Desdemona’s love for Othello is sanctified by her intellectual and spiritual intentions. Desdemona’s “greedy ear” “devours” Othello’s tales as a productive mode of sexuality.<sup>220</sup> In other words, Desdemona has a healthy appetite for romance.

Reading Desdemona as an author of romance provides a new lens for locating other moments of female authorship in *Othello*. Though Othello and Desdemona’s marital conflict overshadow it, female authorship is a dominant trope in *Othello*. Othello’s nameless mother, for instance, constructs romance. She initially endows the handkerchief with its marital symbolism after obtaining it from an Egyptian woman, who also made a tale about the handkerchief. Even still, though, the handkerchief has deeper origins. The handkerchief was originally crafted by a sibyl, a form of material authorship<sup>221</sup> and bodily authorship since the sibyl crafts it from mummified maidens’ hearts, sewn together with worms’ silk made “hallowed” by the maidens’ chaste, pious bodies.<sup>222</sup> Woven into the handkerchief and its past is a generational and gendered female

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<sup>220</sup> The idea of productive (and thereby permitted) sexuality exists also in Britomart’s pursuit of Artegall in *The Faerie Queene* and in John Milton’s famous description of prelapsarian Eve’s wanton hair (4.305-307).

<sup>221</sup> Scholars like Susan Frye have defined material authorship as related to women’s material production of needlework and other artistic expressions. Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England*, (Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 2010). Emilia demonstrates this as well with her acknowledgement that she should have the work “copied” out. See also, Fiona McNeill, *Poor Women in Shakespeare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007).

<sup>222</sup> The handkerchief has a long scholarly tradition, ranging from Thomas Rymer’s seventeenth-century critique (1693) that *Othello* should have been named “The Tragedy of the Handkerchief” to Ian Smith’s

authorship: a sibyl crafts it, an Egyptian woman gives it to Othello's mother, his mother to him, and now he gives it to Desdemona. As Jessica Malay explains, “the handkerchief is a talisman that confers power upon the female to bind the love of the male. It provides protection for the woman, maintaining her control over the male and ensuring she will not be abandoned.”<sup>223</sup> Thus, Othello distorts the original story, translating it to conform to his own marred narrative of Desdemona's infidelity. Thomas Rymer once callously renamed *Othello* as “The Tragedy of the Handkerchief,” but maybe a more appropriate name is “The Tragedy of Female Authorship,” being that the true tragedy is that Iago and Othello misconstrue the handkerchief so that it becomes an indicator of wifely infidelity more so than a symbol of female agency, authorship, and storytelling that it so clearly originates as. Even still, Othello passes to Desdemona not only the handkerchief, but also presumably the “magic” of it--the exotic romance it embodies.

Desdemona also has an appetite for poetry. Upon arrival to Cyprus, Desdemona banters with Iago over poetry. She encourages Iago to make ballads about women. The process is dialogic. Emilia playfully rejects Iago's praise, “You shall not write my praise” (2.1.116), and Iago agrees. Desdemona then asks, “What wouldst write of me, if thou

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recent argument for a black, rather than white, handkerchief as stage prop, which would relate to Othello's black body; see Ian Smith, “Othello's Black Handkerchief.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64.1 (2013): 1-25. Perhaps the most influential study of the handkerchief is Lynda Boose, “Othello's Handkerchief: ‘The Recognizance and Pledge of Love,’” *English Literary Renaissance* 5 (1975): 360-374, who introduces the association between the strawberry-spotted handkerchief and the marital bed, thus becoming “a visually recognizable reduction of Othello and Desdemona's wedding-bed sheets, the visual proof of their consummated marriage, the emblem of the symbolic act of generation so important to our understanding of the measure of this tragedy” (363). Natasha Korda, however, has redirected the symbolic and metaphoric nature of the handkerchief and concentrated on the materiality of it. She understands the handkerchief as indicative of European ideologies that “stigmatiz[es] women's and Africans' relations to material objects” (158). *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 111-158.

<sup>223</sup> Jessica L. Malay, *Prophecy and Sibylline Imagery in the Renaissance: Shakespeare's Sibyls*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 115.

shouldst praise me?” (2.1.117). Iago takes up the enterprise, using the trope of the pregnant wit, seen in Chapter 2; “I am about it, but indeed my invention / Come from my pate as birdlime does from frieze, / It plucks out brains and all. But my Muse labors, / And thus she is deliver’d” (2.1.125-128). Like Rosalind, the witty poetry critic of Arden, Desdemona prompts more and more praise of women from Iago only to dismiss his poetry, calling his sayings “old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh in’ th’ alehouse” and his conclusion “lame and impotent” (2.1.138-139; 161). She then advises Emilia not to “learn of him” (2.3.162). Desdemona is a quick-witted poetry critic. That Desdemona delineates between good and bad poetry should come as no surprise as Othello later informs Iago that Desdemona is of “high / and plenteous wit and invention!” (4.1.189-190). Desdemona does not write poetry but is familiar with it enough to critique it, which is its own form of authorship (as reflected in the profession of the literary scholar). According to Ilona Bell, “Elizabethan poetry of courtship empowered the women to whom the poems were addressed: not only did the private female lyric audience have the power to accept or reject the poet/lover’s proposals, but she also held a privileged position: to critique the poem or to counter the poet’s point of view.”<sup>224</sup> Additionally, Sasha Roberts notes that some early modern treatises of literary criticism, such as George Puttenham’s *The Art of English Poesy*, are dedicated to women and concerned with

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<sup>224</sup> Ilona Bell, “Private Lyrics in Elizabeth Cary’s *Tragedy of Mariam*,” *The Literary Career and Legacy of Elizabeth Cary, 1613-1680*, Ed. Heather Wolfe, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 17-34; 29. See also Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998). Juliet’s ambiguous “You kiss by th’ book” line to Romeo also shows women’s agency through reading and criticism. Either Juliet has kissed others before and is calling Romeo’s kiss boring, or she has read of many kisses and thinks that he performs what she has read. Either way, she gives a critique of the kiss, revealing her shared agency in the courting process (1.5.110).

women's comprehension of poetry because "an understanding of rhetorical figures, or ornamental language, is central to a woman's (or man's) ability to write well or judge verse critically."<sup>225</sup> Judging and writing poetry, like reading and writing romance, go hand in hand. Authorial agency resides within criticism.

Desdemona proves herself more than just a literary critic. She also composes. "The Willow Song" scene, which prefaces her death, is a crucial moment of Desdemona's authorship. Preparing her own deathbed, Desdemona recounts a melancholy tale about her mother's maid, Barbary, and Barbary's lover. While the exact circumstances of Barbary's love life are unknown, we can discern from Desdemona's account that Barbary dies as a result of her crazed lover. Here, I quote the Willow Song Scene in full:

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| DESDEMONA | My Mother had a maid call'd Barbary;<br>She was in love, and he she lov'd prov'd mad,<br>And did forsake her. She had a song of "Willow,"<br>An old thing 'twas, but it express'd her fortune,<br>And she died singing it. That song to-night,<br>Will not go from my mind; I have much to do<br>But to go hang my head all at one side<br>And sing it like poor Barbary. Prithee dispatch. |
| EMILIA:   | Shall I go fetch your night-gown?   |
| DESDEMONA | No· unpin me here,<br>This <i>Lodovico</i> is a proper man.   |
| EMILIA    | A very handsome man.  |
| DESDEMONA | He speaks well.   |
| EMILIA    | I know a Lady in Venice would have walk'd barefoot to<br>Palestine for a touch of his nether lip.   |

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<sup>225</sup> Sasha Roberts, "Women's Literary Capital in Early Modern England," *Women's Writing* 14.2 (2007): 246-269; 251. In this article, Roberts emphasizes women's ability to "judge verse critically" as a form of literary capital. Also see her essay, "Feminist Criticism and the New Formalism: Early Modern Women and Literary Engagement," *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 67-92.

DESDEMONA      [*singing*] "The poor soul sat [*sighing*] by a sycamore tree,  
Sing all a green willow.  
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,  
Sing willow, willow, willow.  
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmur'd her moans  
Sing willow, willow, willow.  
Her salt tears fell from her, and soft'ned the stones,  
Sing willow"--  
Lay by these--  
[*Singing.*] "--willow, willow"--  
Prithee hie thee: he'll come anon--  
[*Singing.*]  
"Sing all a green willow must be my garland.  
Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve"--  
Nay that's not next. Hark, who is't that knocks?  
It's the wind.  
EMILIA      [*Singing.*] "I call'd my love false love: but what said he  
DESDEMONA then?  
Sing willow, willow, willow;  
If I court more women, you'll couch with more men."--  
(4.3.26-57).

The Willow Song scene has a long critical history in which scholars try to ascertain the source of the song, its meaning, and why it is included in full-length in the First Folio but not the Quarto.<sup>226</sup> For some, the Willow Song is self-referential to "Will"iam and "O"thello, and the sycamore tree within it exists as a pun on Sick Moor. In other words, Desdemona's song, for some, is not about Desdemona at all, but about Shakespeare and the tragedy's hero. Of course, the action onstage--Desdemona's unpinning--more than the

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<sup>226</sup> This short list indicates the range of scholarly interests with the Willow Song: G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedy with Three New Essays* (1930, rpt. London: Methuen, 1949), 97-119; Brennecke, Ernest. "'Nay, That's Not Next!': The Significance Of Desdemona's 'Willow Song'." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 4.1 (1953): 35-38; John P Cutts, "A Reconsideration of The Willow Song." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 10 (1957): 14-24; F.W. Sternfeld, *Music in Shakespearean Tragedy*. Studies in the History of Music (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 23-52, 126-57; Lisa Hopkins, "What Did Thy Song Bode, Lady?: *Othello* as Operatic Text," *The Opera and Shakespeare*, ed. Holger Klein and Christopher Smith, Publication of the Shakespeare Yearbook 4 (Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), 61-70; and David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, Arden Critical Companions (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), 146-153.

Willow Song itself has recently fascinated scholars and has redirected attention back to Desdemona.

Much ado has been made over undressing Desdemona. For Denise Walen, “The undressing itself symbolizes Desdemona’s vulnerability and innocence.”<sup>227</sup> Walen brilliantly contextualizes the Willow Song in *Othello*’s performance history and notes that cuts which excise the Willow Song from performances

greatly influenced the way critics interpreted Desdemona. ...Unfortunately, the performance history of *Othello* 4.3 also reveals an inclination to suppress and restrain female agency. While staging prompted the initial edits, later deletions were perhaps made easier by the scene’s content: its failure to advance the plot, the troublesome business of the undressing, its focus on minor characters, the fact that those characters are women and that they discuss female infidelity.<sup>228</sup>

In other words, directors cut the Willow Song from performances because it solely attends to women’s sexual and bodily desires. Emilia’s unpinning of Desdemona is also a tantalizing striptease for the audience. The unpinning

makes Desdemona smaller (removing her farthingale reduces the space she occupies on stage by half); vulnerable (the smock troping nudity); perhaps sacrificial (women did penance in their smocks); certainly common, removing signs of difference (‘smock’ being a cant word both for ‘woman’ and ‘prostitute’). This undressing plays off the domestically routine (‘give me my nightly wearing’) against the erotically charged.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Denise A. Walen, “Unpinning Desdemona,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.4 (2007): 487-508, 490.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

<sup>229</sup> Rutter, “Unpinning Desdemona (Again) or ‘Who Would Be Toll’d With Wenches In A Shew?’” *Shakespeare Bulletin: A Journal of Performance Criticism and Scholarship* 28.1 (2010): 111-132; 117.

Rutter catalogues the multiple ways that ‘unpinning’ Desdemona affects her status as a Venetian aristocratic lady. It leaves her naked on stage, stripped of her social class, and dangerously casts her as a whore, the very thing that Othello believes her to be. Certainly Desdemona’s unpinning and conversation convinces the audience of her sexual desire. Indeed, Desdemona admits physical attraction to Lodovico, and Emilia equates women’s sexuality to men’s. Not only do women “make her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch” but they also have genuine sexual desire: “Let husbands know / Their wives have sense like them” (4.3.76-77; 93-94). Wives have appetites--“palates both for sweet and sour”--echoing discourse surrounding Desdemona’s “greedy ear” that “devours” Othello’s stories (4.3.95). Wives have “affections / Desires for sport” (4.3.100-101). The women’s honest talk expresses unfiltered desire. Maybe Iago is not too off the mark when he tells Othello, “in Venice they do let God see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands” (3.3.202-203).

I want to propose that the Willow Song scene is a stripped down moment of female authorship. This scene, as noted, is woman-centered having only Emilia and Desdemona present on stage (a rare moment in the play), and demonstrates female sexual agency. I argue that the act of “un-pinning” along with Desdemona’s reciting of the Willow Song is an example of self-fashioning and bodily authorship. She asks to be unpinned, or rather un-penned as the play’s whore. In Desdemona’s final moments, we have an intimate unrevealing of Desdemona’s body and her role as a composing author.

That Desdemona asks Emilia twice to “unpin” her, once before she sings and again during her song, is neither a coincidence nor an indicator of Desdemona’s



forgetfulness or Emilia's disobedience. "Unpin," furthermore, is not a mere command for Emilia to help Desdemona out of her clothes and into her deathbed. Rather, unpin is a pun on un-pen. Desdemona desires to rewrite the play's plot and her body's role within it. Desdemona needs to un-pen the whoredom that Iago has written upon her and to undress the true narrative of fidelity that Iago's slanderous one veils. Doing so requires stripping Desdemona's body of the lies that have been foisted upon it. She must re-virginize her body.

The lover of romance tales and apt poetry critic that I've traced throughout this essay, Desdemona now demonstrates her ability to compose and adapt poetry to her individual circumstances. The song of Barbary is a well known ballad, and Desdemona appropriates it to her end. Desdemona positions herself as ballad composer. The particularly notable stanza of Desdemona's song is "I call'd my love false love; but what said he then? / Sing willow, willow, willow; / If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men" (4.3.55-57). Ernest Brennecke is the earliest scholar to point out that Desdemona appends this last couplet onto the Willow Song, making it her own: "There is no hint of the idea or phrasing of the conclusion of her song in any of the older versions of the ballad. Desdemona invents and sings it as if in a dream or a deep reverie, thereby revealing more of her subconscious awareness than any spoken words could indicate."<sup>230</sup> Brennecke's observation, combined with recent scholarship by Walen and Rutter who emphasize female agency and the word "unpinning," establishes the Willow Song scene as the pivotal moment for female authorship in *Othello*. She positions herself as a poet,

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<sup>230</sup> Brennecke, 37.

similar to other early modern women who altered poems they recorded in their commonplace books, such as Anne Southwell-Sibthorpe's rendition of Sir Walter Raleigh's "The Lie."<sup>231</sup> Desdemona selects the ballad, creating the puns on "willow" and "sycamore" to describe her dilemma. She also cleverly uses the Willow Song to reveal the true narrative of *Othello* that corrects the one fostered by Iago. "Sycamore" does not just indicate a sick Moor but a sick-amour, a corrupted lover. Rightfully so, Desdemona casts herself as the true love and Othello the unfaithful spouse.

Desdemona, standing in her smock, is a self-created blank-page. Now, the play's two competing narratives fight for the truth to be revealed. On one hand, Desdemona, understanding herself as innocent, recreates the wedding night and restores her body's uncorrupted state in hopes to appease Othello. Othello, too, desires Desdemona's innocence, despite having previously called her as a whore. As Othello enters the bedroom, he wants to erase any trace of promiscuity from Desdemona. Thus, Othello delivers an oddly timed praise of Desdemona's Petrarchan beauty: "I'll not shed her blood, / Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow, / And smooth as monumental alabaster" (5.2.3-5). The fact that Othello smothers Desdemona rather than slaying her with a sword shows his love for her body, his need to preserve its chasteness. The smothering leaves the wedding sheets white, and Desdemona's chastity intact. No blood indicates Desdemona's fidelity. On the other hand, though, Desdemona's self-preservation of innocence works against her. No blood on the sheets also condemns Desdemona as a whore: Desdemona has done the deed elsewhere and has no more

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<sup>231</sup> *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book. Folger MS. V.b.198* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), page 3.

virginal blood to shed. Indeed, as Desdemona sleeps upon the white wedding sheets, she elicits the historical punishment for women convicted of infidelity or other sexual transgressions; they went on trial with their sins written on paper and pinned to a white sheet that covered their body, declaring themselves authors of sexual crimes.<sup>232</sup> Othello's violence against Desdemona "stabilize[s] her identity"<sup>233</sup> as simultaneously chaste and loose, and Othello intends for the murder to secure Desdemona's uncontrollable body. No matter if Desdemona was a whore or virgin, the white sheets provide ocular proof either way. Desdemona is the text that Othello gets to write--a dead wife.

Yet, despite death, Desdemona's corpse generates narrative life both inside and outside of the play. As I opened this section, I explained that Desdemona's final death cry, "Nobody. I myself." was the catalyst for Othello's suicide and death monologue. Beyond the tragedy's end, though, Desdemona's corpse, which often shocks readers, provides imaginative space for contemporary twentieth and twenty-first century women writers to recreate alternative narratives for *Othello*: Paula Vogel's *Desdemona: A Play about a Handkerchief*, Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, and most recently Toni Morrison's *Desdemona*, from which I take this section's epitaph. Morrison's *Desdemona* (2008), set in the afterlife, poeticizes what I have conveyed throughout: that Desdemona is an authorial figure whose death is her greatest moment of composition. The Desdemona that Morrison envisions is a liminal one, who speaks from the grave to set her story straight:

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<sup>232</sup> Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996); and Fiona McNeill, *Poor Women in Shakespeare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007).

<sup>233</sup> Feather, 251.

I exist in between, now: between being killed  
and being un-dead; between life on earth  
and life beyond it.

I rise in art,  
in masks, in figures, in drumbeat, in fire.  
I exist in places where I can speak, at last,  
words that in earth life were sealed or twisted  
into the language of obedience (14).

Desdemona's powerful declaration, here, makes it clear that she had a voice, although it was "twisted into the language of obedience." Here, we must listen from the grave, hearing how Desdemona's corpse reverberates authorial agency.

## Beginning Anew with Death

With the previous texts, I have argued that the wife's corpse authors new textual narratives, which forces their husbands to rewrite the narratives of infidelity foisted upon their wives. This section furthers such an argument but also anticipates Chapter 5 and a ghostly authorship of the female body. In *The Winter's Tale*, one of Shakespeare's most puzzling plays, the wife Hermione suffers imprisonment and subsequent death at the hands of her husband, and miraculously returns from the grave, being brought to life by Paulina's instructions. Has she been alive this whole time and Pauline hidden her? Or does Paulina really bring Hermione back to life, like a Christ-figure raising Lazarus from the dead? My argument takes Hermione's death as literal, since both Leontes and Paulina call the late queen a "corpse" and "ghost" for it is Hermione's death and resurrection that is a materialization of embodied female authorship (5.1.58, 63, and 80).<sup>234</sup> The tale of a

<sup>234</sup> Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company), 1997

returned corpse is a wives' tale that "should be hooted at / Like an old tale," but instead it establishes this fantastical tale as truth and rooted in female agency (5.3.116). *The Winter's Tale* is a wife's, Hermione's, tale.

To speak of death, we must also speak of birth because it is Hermione's pregnancy and the birth of Perdita that results in Hermione's death. Surprisingly, although Hermione is the pregnant body, it is Leontes who produces monstrous births as his patriarchal anxiety heightens upon seeing Hermione with Polixenes. Despite having asked Hermione to persuade Polixenes to stay in Sicilia, Leontes becomes infuriated at seeing the harmless, courtly flirtatious behavior between Hermione and Polixenes: "paddling palms and pinching fingers" and "making practis'd smiles" (1.2.115-116). In this moment, Leontes cannot properly read his wife. He has sent her to woo Polixenes to extend his visit and use courtly behavior to do so, but he now reads Hermione's body as traitorous and exceeding its boundaries, the excess of which is reflected in Leontes's use of alliterative "p" to describe Hermione and Polixenes's interaction. Leontes, in a jealous rage, like Herod and Othello in the above sections, seeks to fix his wife's body, and to establish a narrative that makes sense to him.

Chapter 2's exploration of early modern midwife manuals and their tales of monstrous births provide a lens through which to read Leontes's unaccounted for lunacy. Like writers of midwife manuals, Leontes fancies himself a discernor of the maternal body, and like Gouge, he considers the physical appearance of his wife's maternal body. Leontes convinces himself that Hermione's "outward reverence" toward Leontes by coaxing Polixenes to stay does not equate her "inward disposition;" for Leontes,

Hermione approaches and flirts with Polixenes not because Leontes wishes him to stay but because *she* wishes him to stay a bit longer. In order to reconcile Hermione's flirtation with Polixenes and her pregnant body, Leontes foists monstrous maternal authorship upon Hermione. He creates a narrative that makes Hermione responsible for her eventual imprisonment and death. Let me be clear: this representation of monstrous authority is not welcomed by Hermione, but is a figment of Leontes's jealous fancy, which works to condemn Hermione as an adulterous, rebellious traitor.

Leontes's false narrative begins with questioning his paternity of Mamillius. Ruminating on the possibility of Hermione's infidelity while interpreting Hermione and Polixenes's interaction, Leontes's final reading is that Hermione has potentially already committed adultery. Mamillius, who stands before him, is the materialization of Hermione's infidelity. He asks of Mamillius, "Art thou my boy?," looks back to Hermione who is still "virginalling / Upon his palm," and asks more, "How now, you wanton calf, / Art thou my calf?" (1.2.120; 125-126). By calling Mamillius a "wanton calf," Leontes all but negates his paternity. "Wanton," with its amorous connotations, indicates Leontes's suspicion that Mamillius was conceived out of sport, and the word "calf" makes Mamillius's father, Leontes's a horned-bull, or a cuckold. "Calf" also casts Mamillius as a monstrous birth from Hermione's imagination. As midwife manuals often cautioned, physical similarities between a father and child did not always indicate a wife's fidelity. As we saw in Chapter 2, it was quite possible for a wife to conceive a child with her secret lover and the child still resemble the wife's husband: the wife just needed to be thinking of her husband while sleeping with her lover. The maternal

imagination could distort the child's physical appearance and mask infidelity. Leontes believes this to be the case with Mamillius:

Most dear'st! my collop! Can thy dam?--may't be?--  
Affection! thy intention stabs the centre.  
Thou dost make possible things not so held,  
Communicat'st with creams (how can this be?),  
With what's unreal thou co-active art,  
And fellow'st nothing. Then'tis very credent  
Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost  
(And that beyond commission), and I find it  
(And that to the infection of my brains)  
And hard'ning of my brows. (1.2.136-146)

Leontes stops himself mid-question, not wanting to believe that Mamillius's "dam" could be treacherous. He then blames affection, or sudden jealousy, for persuading him otherwise. Jealousy, as Iago warns Othello, "shapes faults that are not" (3.3.148) causing lovers to see what is not there. Leontes quickly allows his jealousy to control his imagination, causing "infection" and "hard'ning" of the forehead, a place for a cuckold's horns to grow. He, not Hermione, engenders monstrous births. As Monika Karpinska notes, Leontes's madness results from the metaphorical wandering womb; his "sudden onslaught of suspicion and jealousy serves to desex him in his position of patriarchal authority."<sup>235</sup> Paulina charges Leontes with "tyranny" that dangerously combines with "jealousies / (Fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle / For girls of nine)" (3.2.179, 180-182). The marriage between tyranny and jealousy and their consummation yield "damnable" and "monstrous" mandates from Leontes--betrayal of Polixenes, threatened

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<sup>235</sup> Monika Karpinska, "Early Modern Dramatizations of Virgins and Pregnant Women," *SEL Studies In English Literature, 1500-1900* 50.2 (2010): 427-444, 440. See also, Simon Reynolds, "Pregnancy and Imagination in *The Winter's Tale* And Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*," *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature* 84.5 (2003): 433-447.

murder of Camillo, condemning his newborn daughter to death, causing the indirect death of Mamillius, and finally, the death of Hermione (3.2.187, 190). Moreover, Leontes even attributes a misshaping imagination to himself. At Hermione's trial, Hermione says that her "life stands in the level of [Leontes's] dreams," to which Leontes responds, "Your actions are my dreams. / You had a bastard by Polixenes, / And I but dream'd it" (3.2.81; 84). Leontes is the dreaming mother, producing monstrous births.

For Leontes, Mamillius bears too close a resemblance to his mother and carries a threat to Leontes's kingdom. His name, Mamillius, resonates with the mother's maternal body. He frequently stays in his mother's chambers and amongst her ladies-in-waiting, and he participates in the female storytelling culture of wives' tales. Hermione asks, "Pray you sit by us, / And tell 's a tale," and so Mamillius offers tale "fit for winter...one / Of sprites and goblins" (2.1.22-25). As Mamillius begins the tale, Leontes and attendants burst into the queen's chambers, naming Hermione in a plot against Leontes's life; in Leontes's false narrative, Hermione sleeps with Polixenes and carries his heir, a potential challenger to Leontes's crown, and for this she is imprisoned. Hermione's maternal body hosts a dangerous authority. Leontes expresses disdain at Mamillius being so close to Hermione, not just through name but at his physical proximity to her traitorous body, at the moment Leontes enters the chambers. "Give me the boy," Leontes demands, "I am glad you did not nurse him. / Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you / Have too much blood in him" (2.1.56-58). By the time Leontes enters Hermione's chambers, he has fully convinced himself of Hermione's rebellion and accuses her of attempting to draw Mamillius in. Leontes must separate them, and his fear that Mamillius



already shares “too much blood” with Hermione is lessened by the fact that she “did not nurse him,” a testament to the early modern belief that characteristics are passed through a mother’s or a nurse’s breast milk.<sup>236</sup> Although, Leontes does not trust Hermione’s women either. When he first questions Mamillius’s paternity, Leontes immediately remembers that it is women who attest to the father-son similarity, but women “will say any thing” (1.2.131). Leontes realizes that he cannot trust the ladies-in-waiting, the very same ones probably present at Mamillius’s birth. Leontes must force a separation from the maternal sphere and hasten Mamillius’s entry into masculinity before Mamillius turns traitor.<sup>237</sup>

His faulty logic in this maternal space also accounts for Leontes’s outright rejection of Hermione’s new child. Paulina defends Hermione’s innocence with a confirmation that the newborn’s features are identical to Leontes:

It is yours:  
 And might we lay th’old parable to your charge,  
 So like you, ‘tis the worst. Behold, my lords,  
 Although the print be little, the whole matter  
 And copy of the father--eye, nose, lip,  
 The trick of’s frown, his forehead, nay, the valley,  
 The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek, his smiles,  
 the very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger,  
 And thou, good goodess Nature, which hast made it  
 So like to him that got it... (2.3.96-105).

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<sup>236</sup> See Gail Kern Paster, “Quarreling with the Dugs, Or I Am Glad You Did Not Nurse Him,” *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Discipline of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993); and Dowd, “The Spatial Syntax of Midwifery and Wet-Nursing,” *Women’s Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>237</sup> Susan Snyder, “Mamillius and Gender Polarization in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50.1 (1999): 1-8; and Susan Bruce, “Mamillius and Leontes: Their Final Exchange,” *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 16.3 (2003): 9-12.

Paulina repeats some of the same language used in midwife manuals by which it is the father's forming faculty that shapes the "matter," ensuring a father's natural authorship of the child. Paulina, a midwife herself, brings forth the newborn to attest publically before Leontes and the court that the newborn is Leontes's and that Hermione is no traitor. Trying to correct the slanderous narrative of Leontes, Paulina authors Hermione's innocence. This is to no avail, however, because Leontes carries on with his faulty narrative. He materializes his own monstrous birth of Hermione's infidelity into a royal indictment that is read before court (3.2.11-21) and publishes Hermione's adultery "on every post / Proclaim'd a strumpet" (3.2.101-102). Despite Paulina's and Hermione's best efforts, Hermione remains imprisoned and dies.

At this moment in the play, Hermione seems completely agent-less, yet just like Mariam and Desdemona, Hermione's death sparks new agency and directs a new narrative, which juxtaposes Leontes's manufactured narrative of monstrous maternal authorship. Hermione's corpse authors a maternal authorship that ensures the safety of her daughter and eventually leads to restoration and narrative renewal. Literally, Hermione's death marks a new direction as the play follows Perdita (an extension of Hermione) into the pastoral romance, leaving the tragedy of Sicilia behind. More intriguing than the switch in genre is how Hermione continues the overarching narrative via dream. Just like Mariam and Desdemona, Hermione cannot stay put in the grave. As Antigonus relates,

I have heard, but not believed, the spirits 'the' dead  
May walk again. If such thing be, thy mother  
Appeared to me last night, for ne'er was dream

So like a waking. To me comes a creature,  
Sometimes her head to one side, some another,  
I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,  
So filled and so becoming. In pure white robes,  
Like very sancitivity, she did approach  
My cabin where I lay, thrice bowed before me,  
And, gasping to begin some speech, her eyes  
Became two spouts. (3.3.16-26)

With her quick address to Antigonus, she “with shrieks, / ... melted into air” (3.3.36-37). Hermione’s ghost, ironically enough, is a moment of embodied female authorship. Her spirit returns in a material form: she has on “pure white robes,” “shrieks,” “bows” before Antigonus, “gasps,” speaks, and weeps uncontrollably. Her ghost continues the narrative, giving an afterlife to what seems to be the end of Hermione’s story. She also regains authority of her maternal body, reclaiming the newborn as hers by naming it and commanding Antigonus to leave the babe in Bohemia. Instead of killing the baby as Leontes has ordered, Antigonus saves the infant’s life, ultimately allowing for reconciliation between Polixenes and Leontes *and* the continuation of both kingdoms. Katherine Kellett writes, “As a ghost, Hermione is represented as a speaking, moving, and desiring subject who still commands admiration from her male onlooker.”<sup>238</sup> In spite of death, Hermione demands power and regains authorial agency. She refuses to be imprisoned in the grave.

What Antigonus recounts is an unbelievable tale but one that proves true--a prophetic wives’ tale--and further reveals *The Winter’s Tale*’s commitment to female

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<sup>238</sup> Katherine R. Kellett, “Petrarchan Desire, the Female Ghost, and *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Staging the Blazon in Early Modern English Theater*, Ed. Deborah Uman and Sara Morrison, (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2013), 25-36; 33.

authorship by allowing its main narrative to operate like a wives' tale.<sup>239</sup> The authority of wives' tale plays out in Act 5. Upon the return of Perdita to Sicilia, the gentlemen of Sicilia speak of the return and reconciliation between Perdita and Leontes as an "old tale" that is strange and much too wondrous for belief. The news is so unbelievable that one gentleman describes it as indescribable: "Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it" (5.2.23-25), referring back to the humorous exchange between Autolycus, Mopsas, and Dorcas about ballads, "I love a ballet in print a-life, for then we are sure they are true" (4.4.260-261). The gentlemen have such a hard time believing the news that one remarks that "This news, which is call'd true is so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (5.2.27-29). The other gentleman confirms its verity, "Most true, ' f ever truth were pregnant by circumstance. That which you hear you'll swear you see, there is such unity in the proofs" (5.2.30-32). Perdita's return is a wives' tale that holds material truth.

The most significant tale of *The Winter's Tale* is Hermione's resurrection. The final wives' tale places rightful authorial agency in the wife's body, and debunks Leontes's slanderous narrative that led to Hermione's death and separation of the family. The wife's corpse is the focal point of the play as a statue that stands before Leontes and others. Paulina, almost as reversing Leontes's deathly imagination, tells Leontes to behold the statue but not stare too long, "lest [his] fancy / May think anon it moves" (5.3.60-61). "Come," Paulina calls to Hermione, "I'll fill your grave up" (5.3.100-101).

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<sup>239</sup> Recent scholarship on wives' tales include Mary Ellen Lamb and Karen Bamford, eds., *Oral Traditions and Gender in Early Modern Literary Texts*, (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2008); and Richard Levin, "Old Wives's Winter's Tales and the Gendering of Story-Telling." *Shakespeare Newsletter* 58.2 (2008): 65-66.

Hermione's statue stirs, steps down to Leontes, and embraces him. Polixenes rightly inquires of Paulina, "where she has liv'd / Or how stol'n from the dead?" What Leontes and others are staring at, they cannot believe: a moving statue, a revived corpse. The facts and logic are confined to Hermione and Paulina, a shared authority that regains them agency over Leontes. Paulina responds, "That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale; but it appears she lives" (5.3.114-117). The wife's body has become fully redeemed. Unlike the fates of Herod and Othello, Leontes gets to live out the new narrative set forth by Hermione's corpse. Death renews life.

The three dramas of Chapter 4, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, *Othello*, and *The Winter's Tale*, reveal the strangest wives' tale of them all: that life can exist in a coffin. These tales are dramatic renderings of coffin births. Sent to the grave, Mariam, Desdemona, and Hermione refuse to succumb to stabilized, false narratives about their sexuality; instead, they come back to life to tell their tales anew, showing that embodied female authorship does not end with the death of the woman. More importantly, these three dramas illustrate the necessity of scholarly attention to female authorship that calls out from narrative graves. In the words of Toni Morrison's Desdemona, "I exist in between, now: between being killed / and being un-dead...I join / the underwater women; stroll with them / in dark light, listen to their music in the / spangled deep."<sup>240</sup> (14). Graves do not silence. Women always "exist in between" dominant authorial narratives and marginal ones of resistance. Our task is to highlight the marginal narratives of authorship that always already exist. From here, we leave one wives' tale for another as

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<sup>240</sup> Morrison, 14.

related by Lucy Hutchinson who provides a stunning account of haunting her dead husband's prison chambers.

## CHAPTER V

### GHOSTLY AUTHORSHIP

[The *Memoirs*] denies Lucy Hutchinson any being apart from John Hutchinson even as, without him, it confers on her an enduring identity; it characterizes her as his shadow when his surviving image is hers; it presents him as her author when he is her literary creation—N.H. Keeble, “‘The Colonel’s Shadow’”<sup>241</sup>

I begin my final chapter with a tale more puzzling than Desdemona’s second death or Hermione’s return from the grave: a ghost who writes her husband’s memoirs. In Lucy Hutchinson’s *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (1664), Hutchinson records God’s providences bestowed upon her husband from cradle to grave, including his courtship of Lucy, his participation in the Civil Wars, his quiet retirement, and his post-Restoration fate. While many unforgettable events happen to John, perhaps one of the most remarkable is Hutchinson’s relation of her own ghost:

But the spring after [John’s death] there came an apparition of a gentlewoman in mourning in such a habit as Mrs. Hutchinson used to wear there, and affrighted the guards mightily at first; but after while grew familiar to them and was often seen walking in the Colonel’s chamber and on the platform and came sometimes into the guard among them. Which is certainly true, but we knew not how to interpret it. (336)<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> N.H. Keeble, “‘The Colonel’s Shadow’: Lucy Hutchinson, Women’s Writing and the Civil War,” *Anne Clifford and Lucy Hutchinson*, ed. Mihoko Suzuki (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009), 241-61.

<sup>242</sup> All citations of *Memoirs* come from Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, edited by N.H. Keeble (London: Everyman, 1995).

Here, Hutchinson relates something that, in Paulina's words, "would be hooted at."<sup>243</sup>

Unlike the fictional Hermione who returns from the grave through magical powers, Mrs. Hutchinson's apparition is a supposed factual event, but it is nonetheless inscrutable.<sup>244</sup> Hutchinson's purpose in writing *Memoirs* is to reflect upon the wonders of God, his providences, yet the ghost is one wonder that she leaves ambiguous and open to readers' interpretation. At first glance, Mrs. Hutchinson's apparition might be taken as a sign of Lucy Hutchinson's adherence to a patriarchal model of marriage and a woman's subordinate place within it, but I offer an interpretation that emphasizes the figurative ghost as an authorial strategy by Hutchinson to write a providential, godly counter-narrative to the Restoration, which signaled the metaphorical death of the English republic.

Mrs. Hutchinson's apparition shares a quality with the historical Lucy Hutchinson: the difficulty of interpretation. For literary historians, Hutchinson is an enigma. Everything about Hutchinson's prolific, unparalleled literary output among seventeenth-century writers, including *Memoirs*, bucks against the submissive claims of a wifely inferiority forwarded by Hutchinson in the *Memoirs*.<sup>245</sup> The language of a wife's

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<sup>243</sup> William Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 5.3.115.

<sup>244</sup> Let me clarify my use of names since the *Memoirs* is written by Lucy Hutchinson and contains references to Hutchinson. I believe the text, despite being called a memoir and Hutchinson's emphasis on telling the truth, contains some fictional moments as well, and therefore, I keep separate the writer from the character. I use "Hutchinson" to refer to Lucy Hutchinson, the writer of the *Memoirs*; "Lucy," or "Mrs. Hutchinson" to speak of the character Lucy Hutchinson.

<sup>245</sup> Although quite a prolific writer of poetry, religious treatises, translations, memoir, and autobiography, Hutchinson published only one work during her lifetime: her Genesis epic, *Order and Disorder* (1679), which remained anonymous. Until David Norbrook's invaluable scholarship on Hutchinson, the Genesis epic remained attributed to Hutchinson's royalist brother, Sir Allen Apsley (his name is even still attached



apparition haunting her dead husband's prison chambers combined with Hutchinson's claim of being her husband's shadow and his submissive wife all but convinces readers of Hutchinson's welcomed self-immolation. "[H]e was the author of that virtue he doted on, while she only reflected his own glories upon him; all that she was, was him while he was here, and all that she is now at best is but his pale shade," (26) writes Hutchinson of her relationship with John. He is the author of her virtue. Without John, Lucy is nothing but a "pale shade" of her former being. As Erica Longfellow remarks, "such language of copies and originals, mirrors and reflections has caused difficulties for feminist critics."<sup>246</sup> The challenge of Lucy Hutchinson's legacy is how to interpret her two seemingly disparate identities of the self-immolating shadow and the creative intellectual.

Within *Memoirs* scholarship, attention to this qualm centers on the authorial paradox of *Memoirs*, which N.H. Keeble first described in his foundational essay, "The Colonel's Shadow," from which this chapter's epigraph comes. While Lucy claims that John is her creator, she actually authors his identity, which has lasted throughout history.

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to the document in *EEBO*). See David Norbrook, "'A devine Originall': Lucy Hutchinson and the 'woman's version.'" *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 March 1999: 13-15; and "Lucy Hutchinson and *Order and Disorder*: The Manuscript Evidence." *English Manuscript Studies: 1100-1700 Volume 9: Writings by Early Modern Women*, ed. Peter Beal and Margaret J.M. Ezell (London: The British Library, 2000), 257-91. Hutchinson's other texts remained solely available in manuscript until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Memoirs* first appeared in print in 1808 and saw much success throughout the nineteenth-century (see note 7), and her religious treatise, *On the Principles of the Christian Religion* ran through a couple of editions in the 1800s. Her translation of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* ("On the Nature of Things") was circulated via manuscript and dedicated to Lord Anglesey; Hutchinson's translation is notable for being the first English translation of Lucretius's text. For full exploration of Hutchinson as author, see Robert Mayer, "Lucy Hutchinson: A Life of Writing." *The Seventeenth-Century* 22.2 (2007): 305-35. The University of Oxford's Centre for Early Modern Studies house a magnificent web-resource, "The Lucy Hutchinson Project," for those interested in Lucy Hutchinson, which contains a running bibliography of scholarship, updates on new editions of Hutchison's works, and information about Hutchinson's life, political leanings, and religious affiliations (<http://www.cems-oxford.org/projects/lucy-hutchinson>).

<sup>246</sup> Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 180.

Hutchinson's *Memoirs* became one of the most popular memoirs of the nineteenth-century and led one literary scholar to herald her as a "portent in the evolution of fiction."<sup>247</sup> Still, most scholars have concentrated on locating the 'real' Lucy Hutchinson in the *Memoirs*, an unfortunate result of the fact that Hutchinson's autobiography abruptly ends for unknown reasons. Two prevailing theories for this unexpected ending are one, Hutchinson's "self-censorship," which causes her to write her husband's life in order to include her own story, and two, a mischievous hand of patriarchy that suppresses her story.<sup>248</sup> Because the autobiographical fragment reveals so little about Hutchinson, scholars seek her out in the *Memoirs*, looking solely at moments where Hutchinson appears in the text, mostly ignoring the literary merit of the entire text or that the text is "deliberately shaped and phrased and reflect[s] a particular authorial identity."<sup>249</sup> What

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<sup>247</sup> B. G. MacCarthy, *Women Writers: Their Contribution to the English Novel 1621-1744* (Oxford: Cork UP, 1946), 107. First published by Julius Hutchinson, a distant relative of John Hutchinson, in 1806, the *Memoirs* gained much attention throughout the nineteenth century with numerous republications. For a complete history of the manuscript and the editorial decisions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Norbrook, "'But a Copie': Textual Authority and Gender in Editions of 'The Life of John Hutchinson,'" *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts, III*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Tempe, AZ: Renaissance English Text Society, with Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies: 2004), 109-130.

<sup>248</sup> Susan Cook, "'The Story I most particularly intend': The Narrative Style of Lucy Hutchinson," *Critical Survey* 5.3 (1993), 271-277; 275. Keeble, in his edition of *Memoirs*, suggests that Hutchinson possibly "abandon[s]" her life story for that of her husband" (345n.36). Additionally, Elaine Hobby speculates that since married women "legally became a part of their husband, it is not surprising that the projects of writing their autobiographies and writing the biographies of their husbands were intimately connected" (78). Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649-88* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1989). Regarding theories of suppression, Sharon Cadman Seelig suggests that women, like Hutchinson, who disclosed "their intimate thoughts," such as love interests, was inherently transgressive and thus, "such writing was deliberately removed" (81). Seelig, "Pygmalion's Image: The Lives of Lucy Hutchinson" in *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature: Reading Women's Lives, 1600-1680*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 73-89. Norbrook's, "'But a Copie,'" demonstrates how between 1846 and 1968, editors of the *Memoirs* manipulated the text to cast Hutchinson as "conservative and patriarchal," leading to "a misunderstanding of Hutchinson's own engagement as a writer" (109, 110).

<sup>249</sup> Norbrook, "Memoirs and Oblivion: Lucy Hutchinson and the Restoration," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 75.2 (2012): 233-282; 236. For scholars who give special attention to Hutchinson's rhetorical devices in *Memoirs*, see also, Longfellow (note 6), Seelig (note 8), and Norbrook, "'Words more than

scholars discover over and over is that the *Memoirs* reveals a Lucy Hutchinson with a split-identity of submissive wife and a “creatively, bold writer,” leaving scholars to reconcile the two facets of her identity.<sup>250</sup> Elaine Hobby delineates between Hutchinson’s warring identities with the pronouns “she” and “I,” as employed by Hutchinson throughout *Memoirs*. “She” is Mrs. Hutchinson, the “devoted wife, dutiful to her husband...and pleased to be so,” and “I” is “the author the creating artist who stands outside the relationship.”<sup>251</sup> On one hand, there is Lucy Hutchinson, or Mrs. Hutchinson, who is peripheral to the story of John Hutchinson, the “she” Hobby identifies. Mrs. Hutchinson writes of herself in third person, ducks in and out of the narrative, and labels herself as “a very faithful mirror” to John Hutchinson (51). The *Memoirs* are about John, not Lucy. She is John’s subordinate “shadow,” an “airy phantasm” and “apparition” after his death. On the other hand, there is Lucy Hutchinson, the agent of the text, the “I” who acts independently of John: she persuades John that infant baptism is wrong, lies to save John from being arrested, and forges John’s name upon a letter asking pardon from the vengeful, restored monarchy. The latter identity of the defiant, authorial Lucy Hutchinson is the unsurprising favorite among scholars; in fact, one of the more popular subjects within *Memoirs* scholarship is Hutchinson’s act of forgery.<sup>252</sup> This creative Hutchinson is

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civil’: Republican Civility in Lucy Hutchinson’s ‘The Life of John Hutchinson’” in *Early Modern Civil Discourses*, ed. Jennifer Richards (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 68-84. My reading of *Memoirs* participates in this type of scholarship.

<sup>250</sup> Keeble, “Introduction” to *Memoirs*, xxvi.

<sup>251</sup> Hobby, *Necessary Virtue*, 79.

<sup>252</sup> Derek Hirst, “Remembering a Hero: Lucy Hutchinson’s *Memoirs* of Her Husband,” *Anne Clifford and Lucy Hutchinson*, ed. Mihoko Suzuki (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009), 682-91; Giuseppina Iacono Lobo, “Lucy Hutchinson’s Revisions of Conscience,” *English Literary Renaissance* 42 (2012), 317-341; and most

much more palatable to contemporary feminist scholarship than is the obedient wife that once thrilled nineteenth-century audiences.<sup>253</sup> While we may desire the fiery, independent Hutchinson, the truth is that that Lucy Hutchinson never existed. Rather, Lucy Hutchinson was an intellectual, prolific writer who aligned herself with patriarchal ideologies.<sup>254</sup> This Lucy Hutchinson makes us just as uncomfortable as Mrs. Hutchinson's apparition makes the prison guards and leaves us with an unsettling, "certainly true" situation that "we kn[o]w not how to interpret."

Let me, then, re-read the above passage containing Mrs. Hutchinson's ghost. Setting aside the 'ghost,' there is another haunting specter, which slips into the passage: "we." This "we" signals a combination of the "she" and "I," a union that allows Hutchinson to retain authorial agency within a loving, but god-ordained patriarchal

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recently Norbrook, "Memoirs and Oblivion: Lucy Hutchinson and the Restoration," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 75.2 (2012), 233-282.

<sup>253</sup> Victorian gender politics, in addition to a nineteenth-century fascination with the history of English Civil War, made Hutchinson's *Memoirs* a popular reprint throughout the 1800s, especially among female historians. Erin Murphy attributes Hutchinson's nineteenth-century popularity to her "text as being read as proto-novelistic rather than historical, with a focus on the love story and a deliberate dismissal of its republican politics. Erin Murphy, "Wartimes: Seventeenth-Century Women's Writing and Its Afterlives," in *Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton*, ed. Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton (Cambridge UP, 2012), 257. See also, Devoney Looser, *British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670-1820* (John Hopkins UP, 2000) and Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge UP, 2009), 213. Roy Strong writes, "More works of art were produced depicting scenes connected with Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, Henrietta Maria and the struggle of Cavalier versus Roundhead than any other period of British history" (137); Strong, *Recreating the Past: British History and the Victorian Painter* (Thames and Hudson: The Pierpoint Morgan Library), 1978.

<sup>254</sup> Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, eds., *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), explores how the conservative nature of Puritanism and its emphasis on patriarchal authority actually gave way to "provoking" and "stimulating" intellectual thought from early modern Puritan women (1). Elsewhere, I outline the necessities of claiming Hutchinson as a puritan woman with patriarchal leanings because it allows Hutchinson's much authorial agency in *Order and Disorder*; see Lauren Shook, "'Pious Fraud': Genesis Matriarchs and the Typological Imagination in Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*," *Modern Philology* 112.1 (2014), 179-205. Elizabeth Scott Bauman, *Intellectual Puritan*.

marriage.<sup>255</sup> This “we” is a third option for reading the authorial paradox of *Memoirs*. The “we,” like Mrs. Hutchinson’s ghost, is not an erasure of authorial agency but the very embodiment of it. Mrs. Hutchinson neither enters into a figurative death to be with John (as in Juliet and Romeo’s relationship), nor does she only enter a figurative death as a way to gain authorial voice (as in mother’s advice books). Instead, Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson uses the ghost as a very distinct authorial strategy in the wake of her husband John’s death, the death of the English republic, and the subsequent silencing of dissenting theological doctrine, such as the Hutchinsons’. The ghost and the rhetoric of shadows throughout *Memoirs* are figurative places from which Hutchinson can write of the failed republic and try to make orderly sense of the Restoration, what she would deem a disorderly world.<sup>256</sup> In order to do so, Hutchinson, I argue, assumes a ghostly authorial status to mirror the authorial hand of God, who with the Holy Ghost, creates men and guides them by Providence, God’s own narrative structure. Imagining herself as a ghost enables Hutchinson’s creation of a providential, republican narrative in the face of a Restoration culture that seeks to repress such narratives. Hutchinson’s story is the embodiment of God’s providential handwriting.

To be clear, Hutchinson’s use of the Holy Ghost to author her narrative and Providence to structure it is not a transgression of her role within a god-ordained

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<sup>255</sup> Susan Amussen, “Political Households and Domestic Politics: Family and Society in Early Modern Thought,” in *On Ordered Society* (New York: Columbia, 1988), 34-66. Amussen notes that not all patriarchal relationships, especially marriages, were tyrannical but more of a “benevolent patriarchy.”

<sup>256</sup> For my governing argument for this chapter, I am indebted to Longfellow’s insightful proposal that Hutchinson’s “language of copies, reflections and shadows...enabled Lucy Hutchinson to speak seamlessly, and unapologetically, about both personal and political tragedy” (180). Whereas Longfellow has an interest in rethinking the gendered split of male public and female private spheres, I am concerned with how Hutchinson’s shadowy language gives way to a ghostly authorship that allows her to mirror the authorial hand of God and Holy Ghost.

patriarchal marriage, but actually an adherence to it. For Hutchinson and other Puritans,<sup>257</sup> God is the “Almighty Author of all beings in his various providences, whereby he conducts the lives of men from the cradle to the tomb.”<sup>258</sup> Michael P. Winship writes, “The events and phenomena of Providence were a running transcript of the primal text of God’s eternal decrees,” and Alexandra Walsham likewise states, “History was the canvas on which the Lord etched His purposes and intentions; nature a textbook and a laboratory in which He taught, demonstrated, and tested His providence.”<sup>259</sup> God is the ultimate fashioner of stories; he creates the world through his Word and sends his best embodied Word, Christ, into the world. His Word is “the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”<sup>260</sup> Understanding God’s divine primal text was the task of the Puritan elect, who were to make the “illegibility of Providence” legible for others.<sup>261</sup> Hutchinson’s elected task, in particular, is to transcribe God’s virtue in John Hutchinson and create an ordained narrative of John’s life for the rest of England to read. Furthermore, her embodied roles as wife and mother make her the perfect candidate to transcribe John’s life without transgressing her place in their marriage.

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<sup>257</sup> I consciously use the now-derogatory term Puritan because Hutchinson gladly took up the label as a way to distinguish herself and her family from the Anglican Protestantism of the Church of England (*Memoirs*, 58). Elsewhere, when I speak of dissenters, I have in mind those religious sects (Baptists, Anabaptists, Ranters, Fifth Monarchs, etc.) that became marginalized and politically suppressed during the Restoration.

<sup>258</sup> Hutchinson, “The Life of Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson, Written by Herself: A Fragment” in Keeble, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson with a Fragment of Autobiography*, 3.

<sup>259</sup> Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1996), 15; and Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford UP, 1999), 2.

<sup>260</sup> Revelations 22.13, King James Authorized Version.

<sup>261</sup> Winship, 13.

Hutchinson at once relies upon the patriarchal model of authorship while advantageously using it to author *Memoirs*. Posed as John's body and creation, Hutchinson regenerates John's virtue into a text that all can read, transforming his corpse into a corpus.

This chapter first contextualizes providence within the political culture of Restoration England to demonstrate how Lucy Hutchinson's ghost is part of a defeated republican project that used "providential prodigies" to emphasize their God's disapproval at the Restoration.<sup>262</sup> The chapter then moves to a close reading of the republican and ghostly nature of authorship in the *Memoirs*. This section rethinks the union of godly, companionate marriage in relation to authorship and explains how Hutchinson casts herself as a human vessel to reveal God's providences by writing her husband's life while also imagining herself as a ghostly shadow of God, the original Author. Finally, the chapter concludes my project as I reevaluate the field of early modern women's writing and suggest that scholars should focus more on authorship rather than the figure of the *woman writer*. Hutchinson's apparition demands a full separation of Lucy Hutchinson, the author, from Lucy Hutchinson, the character. Reading *Memoirs* in regards to authorship studies suggests that what is most valuable about early modern women's writing might not be the woman writer herself but women's negotiation of models of early modern authorship.

### **The Phanatick Publishing of Providence**

Hutchinson's *Memoirs* is part of a dissenting literary culture that denounced the Restoration by publishing tales of God's punishing providence. Among these tales were

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<sup>262</sup> William E. Burns, *An Age of Wonders: Prodigies, Politics, and Providence in England 1657-1727* (Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2002).

inexplicable natural phenomena, such as hail and comets; monstrous births, such as the Kirkhamshire mother who reportedly gave birth to a headless child as punishment for decrying Parliament (which I discussed in Chapter 2); and numerous accounts of apparitions, even apparitional armies that fought in the clouds (*The Wonderful Blazing Star: with the Dreadful Apparition of Two Armies in the Air*).<sup>263</sup> In one story, *A Strange and True Relation of a Wonderful and Terrible Earth-Quake* (1661), a horrific storm complete with loud thunder, “terrible Wind” that blows down a church steeple, and enormous hail, “the like was never seen in any Age before, each Hailstone being about the bigness of an Egge,” was a precursor to a “terrible and fearful Earthquake, which continued almost for the space of an hour.”<sup>264</sup> Some witnesses of the earthquake took it as a sign of Judgment Day. Just when they believed the earthquake to be over, “prodigious Apparitions” appeared of a “perfect Armes and Hands; in the Right-hand was grasped a great broad Sword, and in the left a Cup, or Bowl...full of Blood.”<sup>265</sup> The figures frightened onlookers so much that pregnant women fell into labor. One barren lady gave birth to three boys, complete with teeth and the ability to prophesy. Lest the story be taken as a fable, the author goes to great lengths to declare its truths. The title itself, “*True and perfect Relation...*,” and the author’s claim that the story is a “Real and Authentique Truth” indicate the author’s need to verify authenticity and to attest to

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<sup>263</sup> Burns, *An Age of Wonders*, claims that tales of prodigies were at the core of Restoration politics and religion, which others such as Barbara J. Shapiro read such tales as a Restoration shift toward the empirical. See Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact, England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003).

<sup>264</sup> *A Strange and True Relation of a Wonderful and Terrible Earth-Quake* (London, 1661), 2 and 3.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



his/her own credibility.<sup>266</sup> The title page and last page even include witnesses who can verify the tale. More than the author's credibility is at stake, though. To disbelieve this author is to disbelieve God's almighty power:

let it not seem strange, for we know, and often read, that the Lord doth sometimes manifest his will unto the World in Wonders and Signes, thereby in some part to shew his Omnipotency, and let them know that he is still the Almighty God, and that he sees and knows all our ways, how slight so ever we make thereof: Then how can we praise him sufficiently, when he hear of this strange Disaster that did so lately befall at Hereford, in that he was pleased to keep the like from us here in London, we being as sinful as any.<sup>267</sup>

For the author of this text, this strange occurrence is God's handiwork. As Joseph Glanvill, famed defender of witches' existence, warns, to deny the existence of witches and apparitions is to appear atheist; "we ought not to deny the being of Witches and Apparitions, because they will create us some difficulties in our Notions of Providence."<sup>268</sup> The above passage, though ostensibly apolitical, is very much rooted in the rhetoric of God's judgment and Providence that abounded in Restoration England.

Providence was the new battlefield upon which Restoration culture waged doctrinal and political war. While the dissenters emphasized a reading practice of prodigies that revealed the magnificent work of God, mainstream Anglican clergymen, like Glanvill, dissuaded the public from finding God in every little detail. In fact, mainstream Anglican print culture largely fostered an association between dissenters,

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>268</sup> Joseph Glanvill, *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* (London: 1676), Essay 6.IV, page 13.

whom they called enthusiasts, or fanatics, and providence. For Anglicans and Royalists, it was fanatical providence that led to the English Revolution and decades of civil chaos. Some clergymen were damning in their portraits of dissenters. Griffith Williams, for instance, condemned the Civil Wars and beheading of Charles I as the promotion of “froth sperme of the fanatick people.”<sup>269</sup> Glanvill declared in a sermon commemorating the anniversary of Charles I’s death, “We are fallen into Times, wherein among some, ’tis a piece of *Gallantry* to *defie God*, and a kind of *Wit* to be an *Atheist*; among others, ’tis *Religion* to be *Phantastick*, and *Conscience* to be *Turbulent* and *Ungovernable*.”<sup>270</sup> Glanvill links the fanatic and the atheist, writing about them in one sentence, and paralleling their rejections of order and God-ordained reason. Glanvill’s equation should not be surprising given that for Anglicans, true providence “demanded obedience” to God and thus the monarch.<sup>271</sup> Proper providence, in other words, was used to secure social and political order, as opposed to fanatical providence that allowed men’s conscience, to borrow Glanvill’s phrase, “to be *Turbulent* and *Ungovernable*,” which “threatened the stability of the state and social order.”<sup>272</sup>

Hutchinson’s *Memoirs* has some fantastic providential occurrences, as well: a man who dies “in the passion of laughter” from a love of practical jokes (35); two people who die from “the wind of the bullet” but not the actual bullet itself (125, 205); a colonel “whose soul...hover[s] to take her flight out of his body” but delays long enough for him

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<sup>269</sup> Griffith Williams, *The Great Antichrist Revealed* (London, 1660) 3d., 23; qtd. in Winship, 32.

<sup>270</sup> Glanvill, *A loyal tear dropt on the vault of our late martyred sovereign* (London: 1667), Bv.

<sup>271</sup> Winship, 39.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

to see the defeat of the enemy (225); and an enemy of John Hutchinson named Sir Richard Onslow who “die[s] by a blast of lightening” shortly after “railing against the Colonel” Hutchinson (245). Of course, the most outlandish claim is that her own ghost visits the prison chambers of her dead husband, the account of which began this chapter. It was precisely these types of providential claims that Anglican clergymen opposed.

Not only was fanatical providence on trial but so was the dissenters’ appropriation of the Holy Ghost. Puritans, like the Hutchinsons, relied heavily on their conscience, or what they considered to be the Holy Spirit speaking to them. Lucy Hutchinson notes that John fervently prayed and read scripture, asking for “a right enlightened conscience,” before agreeing to participate in regicide. John “find[s] no check, but a confirmation in his conscience that it was his duty to act as he did,” i.e., sign Charles’s death warrant (235). Housed in the minds of fanatics, the Holy Spirit along with Providence led to chaos and disorder, or so the Anglicans believed. If individuals fully believed that their consciences were in direct contact with God, then those individuals could “claim a source of authority” higher than, and independent of, the Stuart monarch and its mandated laws.<sup>273</sup> At stake in believing in providence was social order.

In an attempt to combat dissenting disorder, the returned king, Charles II, set out various political mandates, which contained policing mechanisms of print culture.<sup>274</sup>

Most notable was the Act of Oblivion and Indemnity (1660), which marked Charles II’s

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<sup>273</sup> Winship, 33.

<sup>274</sup> Important studies on the relationship between politics and literature and the shaping of authors include Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1987); Steven Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649-1689* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993); and Harold Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship under Charles II* (Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 1996).

reconciliation with the republicans and other dissenters and sought to eradicate the injuries done against the monarchy. The act even offered clemency to dissenters and pardoned some regicides, such as John Hutchinson, as long as they had not officiated during the beheading of Charles I. The Act of Oblivion, on the one hand, protected some of the dissenting culture, but on the other hand, it forced them into the shadowy margins of society. John and Lucy Hutchinson felt the double-edged sword of oblivion. In fact, Hutchinson's opening of *Memoirs* alludes to the Act of Oblivion. Although she primarily claims to write as a way to "moderate" her loss, the other reason for Hutchinson's account of John's life is so that readers will not forget John's virtuous nature as time marches on: "when oblivion's curtain is by degrees drawn over the dead face, and things less lovely are liked, while they are not viewed together with that which was most excellent" (16). Oblivion erases people; its "curtain" puts them in the shadows and shines light upon those "less lovely," which become the focus of memory.

The politics of sun and shade, overlaid with religious rhetoric, are literary tropes throughout Restoration literature. Once the royal son Charles II retook the throne, Royalist writers lauded his return as one that brought the sun back into England. John Dryden specifically beholds Charles II's re-entry into England as the return of Christ: "That star, at your birth shone out so bright / It stain'd the duller sun's meridian light, Did once again its potent fires renew." Charles II chases away "Those clouds that overcast" England.<sup>275</sup> However, the rising son cast shadows over the defeated republicans and parliamentarians. While many celebrated Charles II's arrival in languages of stupendous

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<sup>275</sup> John Dryden, *Astrea Redux* in *Selected Poetry and Prose of John Dryden*, ed. Earl Miner (New York: Modern Library, 1985), lines 288-290; 293.

sunbeams, for Hutchinson and fellow republicans, “the sun of liberty then set” upon the republic and “foulest mists” rolled into England (274). For Hutchinson and others, the Restoration embodied the death of their ideal republic and more personally, signaled the death of their beloveds. Hutchinson links her husband’s imprisonment and eventual death to the demise of the republic in *Elegies*. In a revengeful elegy, the speaker chides the sun, equating its encroaching presence with the tyrannical power that imprisoned and murdered the republic:

Heauens glorious Eie w:<sup>ch</sup> all ye world surveyes  
 This morning Through my window shot his rayes  
 Where with his hatefull & vnwellcome beames  
 He guilt y<sup>e</sup> Surface of afflictions Streames  
 In anger at Their bold instrusion I  
 Did yet into a darker Covert fly  
 But They like impudent Suters brisk & rude  
 Me euen to my Thickest Shade persude  
 Whome when I saw y<sup>l</sup> I could no where shun  
 I Thus began to chide Th'im[m]odest Sun<sup>276</sup>

Hutchinson blames the impious sun for watching on as “ye league of God himselfe dissould” and as “a Thanklesse people slaughtring those / Whose noble blood redeemd y:m from their foes.” The speaker angrily prophesies that the sun will soon set: “By Thyne owne light read Thy most certeine doom / Darknesse shall shortly quench Thy

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<sup>276</sup> Elegy 3, “Another on The Sun Shine,” lines 1-10. All citations for *Elegies* come from Norbrook’s text in his article, “Lucy Hutchinson’s *Elegies* and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with text),” *ELR* 27 (1997): 468-521. I use the original spelling as used by Norbrook. The imagery of light and shadows runs throughout Hutchinson’s *Elegies*. Some of the poems echo lines from John Donne’s “The Sun Rising,” as the speaker of the elegy chides the morning sun from peering into a private chamber of mourning (see Elegy 2, “To the Sun Shining into her Cham:”). Longfellow’s chapter in *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* traces the presence of shadows and light in Hutchinson’s *Elegies*. See also, Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, “‘Paper Frames’: Lucy Hutchinson’s *Elegies* and the Seventeenth-Century Country House Poem,” *Literature Compass* 4 (2007): 664-676; and Pamela Hammons, “Polluted Places: Gender, Sexuality and Property in Lucy Hutchinson’s *Elegies*,” *Women’s Writing* 13.3 (2006): 392-415.

impure light / And Thou shalt Sett in Euverlasting Night.” Hutchinson caps the elegy with apocalyptic imagery:

While y:<sup>r</sup> polluted spheres about y:<sup>w</sup> burne  
And y:<sup>e</sup> Elementall heauen like melting lead  
Drops down Vpon y:<sup>e</sup> impious rebells head  
Then Shall our King his Shining host display  
At whose approach our mists shall fly away  
And wee Illuminated by his Sight  
No more shall neede Thy everyquenched Light<sup>277</sup>

Hutchinson turns royalist rhetoric upon its head; while royalists like Dryden might celebrate the return of the monarch and authority, Hutchinson looks to a higher spiritual authority of Christ, the true Son whose beams will drive the gloomy republic’s shadows away. It is this rhetoric of shadows and ghostly mourning that contextualizes the shadowy apparition of Lucy Hutchinson within the *Memoirs*. Put another way, Hutchinson’s authorship depended upon the shadows, not as a form of hiding but as ensuring divine protection.

Other dissenting authors remained in the shadows of print culture but used them advantageously in an attempt to strike fear into the hearts of Stuart supporters. Like the tale of the strange yet wonderful earthquake in 1661 discussed above, many dissenters read the handwork of God as an apocalyptic judgment upon those who marginalized dissenting doctrine and who supported the return of a monarch. William E. Burns charts the rise of what he calls “political prodigy literature” by dissenters, which “served well enough to keep up the spirits of the defeated party and was perhaps also to inspire fresh

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., lines 48-54.

rebellion to cause the Restoration government serious concern.”<sup>278</sup> For Burns, an anonymous 1660 pamphlet *Strange and True Newes from Gloucester* marks the beginning of a print struggle between dissenters and Restoration government. The pamphlet relates tales of people “struck dead for mocking dissenters;” a plague of toads that “appeared in military ranks” to threaten a local governor who condoned the harassment of dissenters; and an earthquake in France.<sup>279</sup> After *Strange and True Newes from Gloucester*, prodigy literature proliferated and was most supported by a London-based printers and stationers called the Confederacy Press, which promoted seditious literature; some of the members of Confederacy Press had participated in the print culture leading to the English Revolution.

The Stuart government soon put political sanctions into place that tempered tales of punishing providence and prodigies. The Licensing Act of 1662, in particular, was in charge of suppressing seditious literature as it regulated the printing, importing, or selling of any books deemed seditious and treasonous, which would essentially “revive the Memory” of the turbulent past, something forbidden by the Act of Oblivion.<sup>280</sup> Although the Licensing Act lapsed in 1695 because of it was “not successfully enforced,”<sup>281</sup> it still had a grave influence on printing culture in the immediate years of the Restoration, and especially during the years Hutchinson would have composed *Memoirs*. In fact, the 1679

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<sup>278</sup> Burns, 20.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>280</sup> Charles II, *An Act of Free and Generall Pardon Indemnity and Oblivion*, 1660. *Statutes of the Realm*. Vol. 5: 1628-80, ed. John Raithby, 1819; Section XXIV.

<sup>281</sup> Michael Treadwell, “The Stationers and the Printing Acts at the End of the Seventeenth Century,” *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume 4: 1557-1695*, ed. John Barnard, D.F. McKenzie, with Maureen Bell (Cambridge UP, 2008); 755-776; 765.

edition of Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder* bares significant marks of the 1662 act. Printed anonymously, the text has affiliations with Royalist supporters, which is probably the reason that the abridged-version of *Order and Disorder* was even printed at all. The title page reveals that it was printed by a Margaret White for Henry Mortlock, two names associated solely with Royalist texts: numerous sermons preached before Charles II and his wife, and at least two texts by Joseph Glanvill, one of which is *Essays*, which spoke against fanatic religious practices. Even more intriguing has always been the question of why Hutchinson would allow the first five cantos of *Order and Disorder* to be in print but leave the majority of the work in manuscript. The Licensing Act, in particular, gives us an answer. The 1679 text of *Order and Disorder* is solely an account of the Creation and Fall; however, after the Fall, in the remainder of the unprinted-text, is an elaborate retelling of Genesis that draws strong parallels between the politically-suppressed elect and God's promised nation, Israel. This unprinted section contains mentions of "Perfumèd courtiers" whose "Unnatural heat unnatural lust" led to the demise of Sodom and Gomorrah and of ungodly women:

The pride and idleness of our loose dames  
Are the lewd parents of those lustful flames  
Which fire the world and make them blazing stars,  
Engendering murders, hate, and civil wars.<sup>282</sup>

Ungodly, lustful, and prideful men led to the Civil Wars. Furthermore, the anonymous publication of *Order and Disorder* might also be attributed to the fact that John Milton,

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<sup>282</sup> Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. David Norbrook (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2001), lines 13.258, 257; and 16.65-68.



the author of the period's most famous Creation and Fall narrative, had himself struggled with the main enforcer of The Licensing Act: Roger L'Estrange.<sup>283</sup>

To ensure that dissenters did not flood print culture with seditious texts, Charles II enlisted Roger L'Estrange as royal censor. L'Estrange was a staunch Royalist and pre-Restoration propagandist, who believed his "true vocation as a knight of the pen rather than the sword."<sup>284</sup> L'Estrange gladly took the appointment offered by Charles II, and he kept it until the lapse of the Licensing of the Press Act in 1679 (the same year of *Order and Disorder*'s publication). With the king's permission, L'Estrange led the "force[d] entry into suspect printing houses, to 'examine' whether works in press were licensed, and to arrest offenders."<sup>285</sup> He now not only wrote against dissenters but could be the one who stopped them from publishing their views: "'Tis the Press that had made 'um Mad, and the Press must set 'um Right Again. The Distemper is Epidemical; and there's no way in the world, but by Printing, to convey the Remedy to the Disease."<sup>286</sup>

One telling embodiment of L'Estrange's successful enforcement of the Licensing Act is the 1664 text, *An Exact Narrative of the Tryal and Condemnation of John Twyn*. John Twyn was a nonconformist who believed that the Restoration marked the return of

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<sup>283</sup> See Sharon Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 173; and Nicholas von Maltzahn, "L'Estrange's Milton," *Roger L'Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page and Beth Lynch (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 27-52.

<sup>284</sup> "L'Estrange, Sir Roger (1616–1704)," Harold Love in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2007, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16514> (accessed January 31, 2015).

<sup>285</sup> Qtd. in Randy Robertson, "Swift's *Leviathan* and the End of Licensing," *Pacific Coast Philology* 40.2 (2005): 38-55, 49.

<sup>286</sup> Qtd. in Erin Murphy, "Wartimes: Seventeenth-Century Women's Writing and It's Afterlives," *Rethinking Historicism from Shakespeare to Milton*, ed. Ann Baynes Coiro and Thomas Fulton (Cambridge UP, 2012), 257-282; 264.

Stuart tyranny. In 1663, L'Estrange had reason to search Twyn's premises and found an unauthorized printed text, *A Treatise of the Execution of Justice*, which contained seditious remarks against the Stuart monarch and urged dissenters to remove Charles II as they had his father. For his sedition, Twyn was tried, executed, and quartered. Lest anyone forget his crime, his head and quarters were publicly displayed. The *Exact Narrative of the Tryal and Condemnation of John Twyn* outlines the reasons for Twyn's trial and why the Stuart monarch found the book to be dangerous. The preface to the *Exact Narrative* describes the treatise as such: "the Cast, and *Bias* of it, with the Rebels late *Declaration* in the North, will swear that they were Both written with the same Ink. It was in fine, an *Arrow* drawn out of a *Presbyterian Quiver* [*Lex Rex*] The very Shaft [?], that formerly pierced the *Late King* through the Heart, now Levelled at *This*."<sup>287</sup> Here, the ghosts of the Civil Wars make themselves apparent through print, a haunting embodiment of the past wars:

Be it known to the Reader, that this Book was not, as it pretends to be, a true account of the *words* (written, or spoken) of dying men, but a meer *Forgery* and *Imposture*, Fathered upon those, that were *Executed*; but *contrived* by the *Traytors* that *scaped*; as deeming it their safest way, to publish the *designs* of the *living*, in the *words* of the *dead*; and the most conducting to their Project of *destroying* the *Present King*, the perswade the *Multitude* into a good Opinion of the *Murder* of the *Last*.<sup>288</sup>

The text projects a legitimate fear that the rebellion will strike again and will make its first attack through printing presses. The purpose of the offending book, the preface

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<sup>287</sup> Authority, *An Exact Narrative of the Tryal and Condemnation of John Twyn, for Printing and Dispersing of a Treasonable Book* (London, 1664); A2v-A3.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, A3

exclaims, was to “*Authorize a Rebellion.*”<sup>289</sup> Traitors, who had escaped execution for regicide, now ghost-authored statements from those whom had been executed. The traitors were cowards for running from their punishment but even more cowhearted for shooting (figurative) arrows at the new monarch. The preface lists three reasons for printing the narrative, one of which is to bring the press “into better Order” and lastly to “caution” those against the “Hazzard of Dispersing of Books, as well as Printing of them; and to the end, that none presume themselves with an Expectation of coming off, in Cases of Treason and Sedition, upon the Plea of Trade, or Ignorance.” (A4v). If the Licensing Act was not enough to deter seditious printing, then the publication and circulation of the *Exact Narrative* were extra policing measures to keep the dissenters in the shadows of Restoration culture. While print censorship is not unique to Charles II’s reign, the 1662 act was important for reinforcing royal authority over Parliament and preempting any foreseeable rebellions.<sup>290</sup> If the previous rebellion had been fueled by print culture, then it could happen again, and a newly resuscitated government was more susceptible to print sabotage than ever before.

Despite measures to forget the Civil Wars and Interregnum, the Restoration was a “period [that] was watched over by various ghosts of the civil war and interregnum...who refused to lie down.”<sup>291</sup> For one, the public execution of the thirteen unpardonable regicides listed in the Act of Oblivion, and the display of their heads, “their dead gazes

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., A3v.

<sup>290</sup> Treadwell, 765.

<sup>291</sup> George Southcombe and Grant Tapsell, *Restoration Politics, Religion and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 10.

cast over London reminding its habitants of the past in all too obvious a form,” made it impossible to forget the past.<sup>292</sup> Furthermore, although Oliver Cromwell, Henry Ireton, and John Bradshaw were exempt from execution by the Act of Oblivion (because they were already deceased), this did not stop Charles II from ordering the disinterment of their bodies, then hang and behead them on the anniversary of Charles I’s execution, January 30, 1661. Cromwell’s head, like the other heads of traitors, was set upon a pike outside Westminster Hall and remained there for two decades. The Act of Indemnity and Oblivion sought to erase England’s previous eleven troublesome years from the country’s collective memory, but Charles II and his Parliament displayed bodily reminders of the infamous republic.

Hutchinson takes up her own project of reviving the republican body. So that “oblivion’s curtain” does not hide John Hutchinson’s memory forever, Hutchinson recreates him (16). Like Pygmalion sculpting the perfect woman or the Petrarchan lover writing into existence the ideal beloved, Hutchinson pens John Hutchinson as a living embodiment of the republican ideal:

He was of a middle stature, of a slender and exactly well-proportioned shape in all parts; his complexion fair; his hair of brown, very thick set in his youth, softer than the finest silk, curling into loose great rings at the ends; his eyes of a lively grey; well-shaped and full of life and vigour graced with many becoming motions; his visage thin, his mouth well made, and his lips very ruddy and graceful, although the nether chap shut over the upper, yet it was in such a manner as was not unbecoming; his teeth were ever and white as the purest ivory; his chin was something long, and the mould of his face; his forehead was not very high; his nose was raised and sharp; but withal he had a most amiable countenance, which carried in it something of magnanimity and majesty mixed with sweetness, that at the same time bespoke love and awe in all that saw him. (18-19).

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

Hutchinson's exceedingly long blazon shapes John into a temple of virtue and recalls her extended blazon of Adam (about 80 lines) in *Order and Disorder*, a description which would have been in print in 1679. God's creation of Adam is "the noblest creature," a term that Hutchinson reserves for the elect of Genesis.<sup>293</sup>

Hutchinson's depiction of John shares similarities with her depiction of Adam. John's virtue is "beyond what I can describe" and cannot "be found in any copy drawn from him" (20); Adam's glorious body also surpasses human description: "Yet beauty's chiefest excellence lies in this; / Which mocks the painters in their best designs, / And is not held by their exactest lines."<sup>294</sup> Adam's and John's hair draw the most important area of comparison. Adam has a "thick-set grove of soft and shining hair / Adorns the head, and shows like crowning rays, / While th'air's soft breath among the loose curls plays."<sup>295</sup> Likewise, John had "a very fine thickset head of hair, [and] kept it clean and handsome without any affectation, so that it was a great ornament to him." John's hair, in other words, was not typical of the hairstyle of Puritans that gave them the derogatory name of roundheads. Hutchinson remarks, "the godly of those days, when he embraced their party, would not allow him to be religious because his hair was not in their cut" (20). The long hair and parted bangs of John, seen in the only portrait of him, resemble figures like Cromwell and Milton, marking these three men as the heads of the English

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<sup>293</sup> Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 3.20

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 3.120-122

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 3.112-14

Revolution.<sup>296</sup> Hutchinson, I would argue, even takes considerable descriptions of John's hair and clothing in order to elevate him above Cromwell, given that she and John became disillusioned with Cromwell, toward the end of his Protectorate, as will be discussed later. Just as God molds Adam into a perfection of divinity and humanity, "Earth in his members, Heaven in his mind," Hutchinson likewise recreates John as such.<sup>297</sup> God's best creation is Adam; Hutchinson's is her husband.

### **Ghost Writing**

For Hutchinson, the starting point for authorship and creation is always God, and as we saw in Chapter 2, this particular model is inherently hierarchal and patriarchal. However, as we saw in Chapter 3 with the collaboration of Anne Askew and John Bale, this God-ordained authorship, while patriarchal, is not always harmful for women authors. Hutchinson outlines this theory of the authorial God in her Genesis epic, *Order and Disorder*. She ponders how the Trinity of God, Christ, and Holy Spirit functions equally but distinctively in the Creation narrative. The Trinity, Hutchinson speculates, is mysterious at its core because of its paradoxical nature. It contains equality within a hierarchal order: "There's no inferior, nor no later there, / All coeternal, all coequal, are. / And yet this parity order admits."<sup>298</sup> According to Hutchinson, the Creation follows the actions of God, then Christ (or God's Word), and then the Holy Spirit:

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<sup>296</sup> Stephen B. Dobranski, "Clustering and Curling Locks: The Matter of Hair in *Paradise Lost*" *PMLA* 125.2 (2010): 337-353; 342.; Dobranski only speaks of the similarities between Milton and Cromwell.

<sup>297</sup> Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 3.25; 28.

<sup>298</sup> Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 1.95-97.

I'the Creation, thus, by'the Father's wise decree  
Such things should in such time, and order be,  
The first foundation of the world was laid.  
The fabric by th'eternal Word was made  
Not as th'instrument, but joint actor, who  
Joyed to fulfil the counsels which he knew.  
By the concurrent Spirit all parts were  
Fityly disposed, distinguished, rendered fair,  
In such harmonious and wise order set  
As universal Beauty did complete.<sup>299</sup>

God sets forth creation by his “wise decree” according to his timeline, which makes the “first foundation of the world.” Then the matter, or the “fabric” is created by the Son, or “th'eternal Word.” Finally, the Holy Spirit perfects creation by making sure that every part is in “harmonious and wise order.”

The egalitarian-hierarchal nature of the Trinity reveals a distinctive paradigm of authorship for Hutchinson as it models how to maintain authorial agency even within a hierarchal network, both in terms of her relationship with the authorial God and her marriage. The Holy Spirit dwelling in Hutchinson demonstrates a marriage of divine and embodied authorship that allows Hutchinson to reveal God's providence to her readers of *Memoirs*. With the assistance of this ghostly authorship, Hutchinson ensures that God's providence is “fityly disposed, distinguished, [and] rendered fair” throughout John Hutchinson's life in such a way to reveal God's “harmonious and wise order” among even John's most mundane life events. In an authorship that combines the divine and human, the human writer becomes equal, though inferior, to God's authoring power. The writer is essential to revealing God, or in John Milton's bold words, “to justify the ways

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 1.113-122.

of God to man,” but can never deliver creation the way God intended.<sup>300</sup> Where Hutchinson truly outlines her understanding of God’s role as author and her role as mediator of God to others is at the beginning of her autobiography. She writes, “The Almighty Author of all beings in his various providences, whereby he conducts the lives of men from the cradle to the tomb, exercises no less wisdom and goodness than he manifests power and greatness in their creation” (3). God creates humans and crafts their lives through Providence, his narrative structure. Man and woman also have their contribution to God’s master plan by actively meditating upon “these admirable books of providence” and should outwardly attest to God’s providence (3). Hutchinson’s autobiography and her husband’s memoirs are just that: a written materialization of God’s providence.

Hutchinson’s emphasis on Providence is as much a political exercise as it is a spiritual one. As discussed above, Hutchinson is writing in a Restoration culture dominated by the Anglican church that sought to de-emphasize attention to providence. Anglicans could not deny providence, but they deterred Christians from interpreting every little event or happening in their lives as the work of God. Unsurprisingly, Hutchinson opposes this Anglican influence. In fact, in the same sentence that she encourages men and women to read closely “these admirable books of providence,” she expresses disdain for those who “call the most wonderful operations of the great God the common accidents of human life” because those people do not “employ any reflection” upon God and forget to honor him who “takes as well a care and account of their smallest

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<sup>300</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Alastair Fowler, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harlow, England: Longman, 1998), lines 1.26.



concernments, even the hairs of their heads” (3). Hutchinson wants to set herself apart from those that she condemns and therefore writes her autobiography to “general and particular providences exercised” toward her (3).

Likewise, the *Memoirs* is a testimony of God’s Providence still working in England despite the defeat of the republican commonwealth. Indeed, Hutchinson’s description of God as author and director of men’s lives through Providence, while hierarchical, provides stability in the wake of political defeat. Hutchinson needs Providence to make sense of the world. Better stated, Hutchinson *recreates* Providence to give order to a disorderly Restoration culture. As human mediator and recorder of God’s ordained plan, Hutchinson can relate God’s Truth to the nation by establishing it in the body of her departed beloved, John. Hutchinson’s task is not simply to reflect upon God’s providences but also to “impress” the Truth upon the nation’s memory. She believes that “the lovely character of Truth should be impressed upon the tender mind and memory, they are so filled up with ridiculous lies, that ’tis the greatest business of our lives, as soon as we come to be serious, to cleanse out all the rubbish” taught by previous teachers.”<sup>301</sup> Hutchinson parallels the “Almighty Author.” She recreates John Hutchinson, rewriting him into history by recording the “various providences” of his life “from the cradle to the tomb;” in doing so, Hutchinson “manifests [her] power and greatness in [her] creation.” While in *Order and Disorder* when Hutchinson notes that “we may read / In every leaf, lectures of Providence,” we know that she means God’s

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<sup>301</sup> Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, Preface, page 4. Here, Hutchinson supposedly recants her previous translation of Lucretius’s *De rerum natura*, but her sentiment that God calls believers to tell the truth (to evangelize) to other humans is the same.

Providence can be read in nature, in context of the *Memoirs* we can read this line a little differently: it is in every page, or leaf, of *The Memoirs* that Hutchinson reveals the providences of God.<sup>302</sup>

While Hutchinson understands her role as revelator to the English nation and a re-creator of her husband's virtue, she is careful not to transgress the patriarchal hierarchy that God demands of a woman like her. Throughout the *Memoirs*, Hutchinson demonstrates a truly embodied authorship, with the sense that human writing, unlike God's authorship, can never be perfect. Just as Sir Philip Sidney writes in *Defense of Poesy* that Adam's fall has led to humans possessing "erected wit [that] maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it,"<sup>303</sup> Hutchinson believes that her "unskilful pen" can only "draw an imperfect image" of John, which might "injure that memory" or "disgrace his name with a poor monument" (16-17). She settles then for "a naked, undressed narrative, speaking the simple truth" (17). Religious rhetoric qualifies her inaccuracies of John: "What I shall write of him is but a copy of [him]. The original of all excellence is God him[self] and God alone, whose glory was first transcribed [in] the humanity of Christ and [in] that copy left us fair in the written Word" (17; brackets in orig.). Here, Hutchinson carefully attends to a hierarchal authorship, placing "God himself at the apex, John Hutchinson below, and Lucy Hutchinson decidedly near the bottom, creating a copy of a copy."<sup>304</sup> Like many early

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 2.90

<sup>303</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy*, in *Sir Philip Sidney, The Major Work*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 212-250; 217.

<sup>304</sup> Longfellow, 180.

modern writers, Hutchinson employs the humility topos in order to express humble admiration for someone superior.<sup>305</sup>

In Hutchinson's case, her superiors are God and her husband. So what becomes an imperfect embodied authorship for men rewriting God's providence becomes for Hutchinson doubly embodied--as human and female. According to Hutchinson, when John and Lucy marry, "he soon made her more equal to him than he found her, for she was a very faithful mirror to him, reflecting truly, though but dimly, his own glories upon him" (51). The rhetoric of mirrors and reflections, however, is not rhetoric of submission, but language "in keeping with her theology of companionate marriage."<sup>306</sup> It reflects her embodiment as a wife in a god-ordained marriage. Unlike the disjointed marriages between Herod and Mariam, Othello and Desdemona, and Leontes and Hermione, discussed in Chapter 4, John and Lucy Hutchinson have an uncorrupted marriage that facilitates authorship: "he was the author of that virtue he doted on, while she only reflected his own glories upon him; all that she was, was him while he was here, and all that she is now at best is but his pale shade" (26). More intriguing is that the Hutchinsons' marriage resembles the depiction of the Trinity in *Order and Disorder* as an egalitarian, yet hierarchal structure. The Hutchinson marriage follows a mystical marriage of the soul and body, the divine with the human.<sup>307</sup> John and Lucy might be said to also be "coequal" yet still view themselves as part of a god-ordained, hierarchal

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<sup>305</sup> On the humility topos specifically in regard to early modern women's writing, see Patricia Pender, *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>306</sup> Longfellow, 202.

<sup>307</sup> Longfellow's introduction as well as her chapter on Hutchinson speak extensively of how these mystical marriages allowed early modern women "gendered inquiry" into marriage and religion (11).

marriage. In other words, both John and Lucy contribute equally to the marriage, but they occupy different spaces in the hierarchy. On a basic level, their equality is seen in the fact that both strive to establish republicanism in England. John does it on the battlefield while Lucy does so through pen, a sentiment reinforced by Robert Walker's portrait of Lucy Hutchinson seated laurel wreath in her lap and his other portrait of John Hutchinson in his amour; both portraits were commissioned either during the late 1640s or the early 1650s, the height of the English Revolution.<sup>308</sup> The egalitarian is inseparable from the hierarchal. John has ultimate authority in the hierarchy, but Lucy also shares that authority and uses it to author a true and faithful account of John after he has died.

This complex hierarchical model of authorship acts as a circuit of authorial agency; each part, God, husband, and wife, has its own authorized place, and each place has agency via its relation with the other parts. God (divinity) reigns at the top, then John (soul) and then Lucy (body), but this final stage is not without agency. Rather, the ordained embodied space that Hutchinson fills reflects back (through written reflection) and creates an image of the divine in John. Within the Hutchinson marriage, John may be the "author" of Lucy's virtue and Lucy may claim to be his "faithful mirror," but these roles are multidirectional. John authors Lucy's virtue while Lucy authors John's life, reifying the "glories" of John. Even the idea of her as a "faithful" mirror contains agency because it requires consent from Lucy, a willful embodiment of the virtue she sees in John and then a conscious, written recording of that virtue. Hutchinson's position of herself as a ghost and shadow, then, is not a gendered self-immolation but a rhetorical

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<sup>308</sup> Nobrook, "Introduction," *Order and Disorder*, xv.

move that combines the political, religious, and marital aspects that comprise a ghostly authorship.

In telling John Hutchinson's story, she makes sure that John becomes the embodiment of God's Truth and virtue. Hutchinson, in return, is the embodiment of a faithful wife and servant of God, using her earthly talents of writing to reveal the divine through her story of John Hutchinson. Just as God "transcribes" his glory into Christ and leaves humanity a copy "in the written Word," Hutchinson transcribes John Hutchinson's virtue into a written memorial for his children and the nation to read (17).

Hutchinson, indeed, makes herself the essential medium for John Hutchinson's life. Hutchinson, as united with John through marriage, has first-hand knowledge of John's virtue, which she must mediate to her readers. In the first description of John, Hutchinson calls him a

resplendent body of light, which the beginning and ending of his life made up to discover the deformities of this wicked age and to instruct the erring children of this generation, will, through my apprehension and expression, shine as under a very thick cloud, which will obscure much of their luster; but there is need of this medium to this world's weak eyes. (16).

John Hutchinson is a moral light in the dark Restoration of England, and Hutchinson is convinced that England needs to learn from his virtue. Yet because John is so virtuous, there is a need for a "very thick cloud" and "medium:" Lucy Hutchinson. Here, Hutchinson depicts herself as the only one who can deliver the Truth to England in a way that they can receive it. Moreover, through claims of being "entrusted" with "his glory," which she writes "for the benefit of all, and particularly his own posterity," (17) and

being “the faithful depository of all his secrets [who] must witness for” his resoluteness to God (22), Hutchinson validates her authorship, while performing the wifely praise of her husband. If John’s life is to “discover the deformities of...and to instruct” the impious, then Hutchinson’s life purpose is to transmit this mode of edification for all of humankind, not just to the Hutchinson children. She presents herself as holder and bearer of truth as she professes to be “the faithful depository of all his secrets” (22). She identifies herself as a “witness”; one for John Hutchinson’s devotion to God—“in all times his heart was sincere and steadfast to the Lord” (22)—and one for his civility toward his “bitterest enemies” whom he “loved...so well that I am witness for how his soul mourned for them” (25). These statements claiming to be a “faithful depository” and a “witness” to John speak more of Hutchinson’s authorship than of John’s character, mainly because they emphasize her credibility to deliver a truthful account of John’s personal and national role in the English Civil War. Her embodied motherly role as spiritual guide for her children translates into a moral guide for the nation.

Hutchinson conducts her story of John through acts of Providence, another part of her embodied, spiritual authority. In her depiction of how God’s providential scheme intervenes in John’s life from the moment of his birth in 1615 to his death in Sandown Castle in 1664, Hutchinson constructs her story to collide with that of Providence; i.e., already knowing the outcome of John’s life, she can shape her narrative accordingly. Born to a family whose merit sets “them on a stage elevated enough from the vulgar to perform any honourable and virtuous actions” (31), John is destined for a life of greatness above that of ordinary men. He meets various obstacles as a young child but overcomes

them, such as a sickness during infancy that Hutchinson identifies as a “weakness” (34) and a harrowing carriage accident, from which, “by the good providence of God,” he received “no apparent hurt” (38). When telling of his childhood education, Hutchinson remarks that God “designed [John] to do much in a short time,” and for this reason, he excels in a divine education (38). Most notably, Hutchinson interprets the childhood sickness, the carriage wreck, and excellence in education as part of providence. These smaller, less notable childhood events are recapitulated in John’s adulthood. For instance, his childhood “weakness” becomes the sickness that attacks him as an adult and when he is in prison (215, 317-331). Hutchinson notes that God saves John from death in the carriage wreck because he was “reserved for a more glorious death,” (36) meaning his martyrdom in prison. Furthermore, while in Sandown Castle, John once again undertakes a divine education, for he vows to “read nothing there but his Bible” (321) and goes through a “continual study of the Scripture...even to the last, desiring his brother, when he was in bed and could not read himself, to read to him” (328). Of course, Hutchinson only reads a correlation between John’s adolescence and his later years, but this is Hutchinson’s way of emphasizing that readers should reflect upon all of life’s events, making connections to see God’s overarching narrative at work in their lives.

Providence structures the most important event of John’s life: his adventures in love that lead him to Lucy. While in London, John first meets a “young maid, beautiful, and esteemed to be very rich” and then a “young gentlewoman of such admirable tempting beauty” yet succumbs to neither woman. As Hutchinson notes, “it was not yet his time of love; but it was not far off” (44). The divine hand pushes John onward to meet

his destined love, but Hutchinson's authorial hand also crafts this tale of romance, "motifs of providential guidance" meet "those of Petrarchan courtship."<sup>309</sup> John does not fall in love with the previous two beautiful women because, as Hutchinson knows, God ordains him to be with Lucy Apsley. Thus, when John Hutchinson inquires about the owner of "a few Latin books" (46), which he discovers in the Apsely household and is told of Lucy, he begins "to love to hear the mention of her." Of great attraction to John is Lucy's writing, especially one of her sonnets, which contains "rationality...beyond the customary reach of a she-wit" (47). John's fascination with Lucy's intellectual wit later transforms into his dependency on her spiritual intellect. Later while John is imprisoned, he begins to study the Bible diligently and Hutchinson specifically mentions that the pious John asks his wife to bring him the *Dutch Annotations on the Bible*. John, though is unsatisfied with this particular book as the annotations are too short; his solution is to turn to the annotations written by his wife, Lucy, and by which John learns "'much more of the mystery of truth in that Epistle'" and resolves to have Lucy copy out his observations (328). Hutchinson makes it clear that John did not seek Lucy for her looks but for her smarts: "twas not her face he loved" (52). Hutchinson reminds readers, "she was not ugly" (49). In the preface "To My Children," Hutchinson writes, "He loved her soul and her honour more than her outside" (26). John's love is "So constant...that when she ceased to be young and lovely, he began to show more fondness." Just to ensure that John never exceeded the bounds of love or became uxorious, Hutchinson comments, "yet even this, which was the highest love he or any man could have, was yet bounded by a

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<sup>309</sup> Seelig, 85.



superior: he loved her in the Lord as his fellow-creature, not his idol, but in such a manner as showed that an affection, bounded in the just rules of duty” (26). For John, it is not Lucy’s outward beauty but her piety that he loves.

And indeed, John’s “strong impulses” for Lucy are a result “of the Lord, though he perceived it not, who had ordained him, through so many various providences, to be yoked with her in whom he found so much satisfaction” (47). John’s immense passion for Lucy, a woman that he only knows by hearsay, is an “effect of a miraculous power of Providence, leading him to her that was destined to make his future joy” (49). Additionally, the romance of John and Lucy is a “secret working” that young Lucy fails to perceive but John notes as “a secret power [which] had wrought a mutual inclination between them” (50). Hutchinson essentially rereads the factual marriage between John and Lucy through a providential lens, tailoring it as a tale of romance.<sup>310</sup>

Aside from the Hutchinson relationship, God’s providence directs John toward a life as defender of Puritan faith. By faithfully reading the Bible, John feels a “remarkable providence of the Lord in his life,” and allows God to “instruct” him (54). Employing the biblical exegesis of typology, Hutchinson casts John as a correlative type for Moses and

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<sup>310</sup> Despite Hutchinson’s claims to “pass by all the little amorous relations” for more “worthy” subjects and “the greater transactions of his life,” Hutchinson at least hints that John and Lucy’s relationship “would make a true history of a more handsome management of love than the best romances describe” (51). Many scholars have grappled with Hutchinson’s use of the mode of romance in her relation of John and Lucy’s courtship. Most recently, Julie Eckerle includes Hutchinson in her study of the romance mode throughout early modern women’s life writing; *Romancing the Self in Early Modern Englishwomen’s Life Writing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), esp. 100-103. Susan Cook, Sharon Seelig, and N.H. Keeble (“The Colonel’s Shadow”) also theorize about Hutchinson’s simultaneous allusion and disavowal of romance. Hutchinson makes a similar demur claim of authorship in her preface to *Order and Disorder*, writing “Had I had a fancy, I durst not have exercised it here; for I tremble to think of turning Scripture into a romance” (5). A possible explanation for Hutchinson’s hesitancy to write in a romantic fashion could be that romance was primarily the domain of royalist writers.

emphasizes John's role as a liberator for the English people who need to be saved from the tyrannous King Charles.<sup>311</sup>

If small things may be compared with great, it seems to me not unlike the preparation of Moses in the wilderness with his father-in-law, where it is thought he writ the book of Genesis....Certain it is, he was sequestered from Pharaoh's court, allowed the consolation of a wife and blessed with two sons in his retirement, and had more pleasure in the contemplation of God's great works than in all the enjoyments of the world's vain pomps, before he was thus prepared to be a leader of God's people out of bondage. (54-55)

Hutchinson correlates for the reader every similarity between Moses and John Hutchinson, even incorporating the famous story of Moses and the burning bush. While "sequestered from a wicked court" and retired in the country, John "beheld the burning bush still unconsumed" and "had a call to go back to deliver his country, groaning under spiritual and civil bondage" (55). Though Hutchinson recognizes other "Moseses" of the time (55), John is the only individual that she names and directly relates to Moses, a decision that corrects the tendency of Puritans to cast Oliver Cromwell as "a new Moses" who leads them to freedom.<sup>312</sup> As we will see later, Hutchinson has a keen sense of using other characters in the *Memoirs*, including Cromwell, to throw into relief John's virtuous character; by leaving out the names of the other Moseses, Hutchinson elevates John's role in the Civil War. Furthermore, Hutchinson's paralleling of John to Moses "vindicates"

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<sup>311</sup> Seventeenth-century Biblical exegesis was highly informed by typology, an interpretation of the Bible that links the people and events (types) of the Old Testament to the people and events (antitypes) of the New Testament. Thus, Adam stands as the ultimate type for Christ, the antitype, who corrects and recapitulates Adam's actions, fulfilling the promise given to Adam. For the Puritans, typology provided an understanding of the political turmoil of the 1640s and 1650s, ensuring them that God's providence directs their personal and political devotion to the Puritan cause: "they felt as genuine recapitulations in the domain of God's Providence" (131). See Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979).

<sup>312</sup> Lewalski, 131.

John Hutchinson's historical action of signing Charles I's death warrant.<sup>313</sup> Of course, at the center of this typological allusion to Moses is the hope that the Hutchinson children and other Englishmen will re-learn of John's role in history. He is not a regicide but a godly man, completing the work of God.

Hutchinson's correlation of John to Moses is one of the key moments where Lucy balances praise of her husband with a cautious, shadow-like authority. Hutchinson is a Moses hiding behind a Moses.<sup>314</sup> Unlike her husband, she does not lead the country into battle, but she does record and narrate the Civil War, an action that recalls Moses's commonly accepted role as “the first historian, the first poet, [and] even the first author.”<sup>315</sup> If God prepares John Hutchinson to be the Moses who liberates through military exploits and politics, then God similarly ordains Lucy Hutchinson as the Moses who directs through her pen. In her autobiography, Hutchinson relates, “my mother, while she was with child of me, dreamed that she was walking in the garden with my father and that a star came down into her hand.” Lucy's father interprets the dream as an indicator that their daughter will be “of some extraordinary eminency” (14). This foreshadowing dream reinforces Hutchinson's role in the *Memoirs* as someone who actively contributes to the Puritan cause through use of her wit and writing. As Moses transcribes God to the Israelites, Hutchinson mediates God's providence to her readers.

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<sup>313</sup> Keeble, “Introduction,” xxiii.

<sup>314</sup> As Seelig notes of Hutchinson's correlation of John Hutchinson to Pygmalion in the narrative of their romance, Hutchinson assumes “the role of discerner and articulator of the divine will” and becomes “perhaps the true Pygmalion of these [the biography and her autobiography] texts” (89).

<sup>315</sup> Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor: An Account of the Commentaries on Genesis, 1527-1633* (Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina Press, 1948), 3.

Perhaps, the best unacknowledged providence in the *Memoirs* is God's ordaining of Lucy Hutchinson as author.

Hutchinson's authorial role as divine hand remains in the shadows of the text throughout her depictions of John's relationships with other Parliamentarians, who she often describes as just as impious as the Royalists. One incident early in the *Memoirs* between Sir John Gell and John Hutchinson demonstrates John's resolute piety and loyalty to the Puritan cause, alongside Hutchinson's ability to author the truth. She introduces Sir John Gell as a sheriff of Derbyshire who only joins the republican cause in order "to prevent punishment from Parliament" (92). Upon becoming a Parliamentarian general, Gell assembles a troop of "the most licentious, ungovernable wretches, that belonged to the Parliament" (92). Never wholly committed to the war effort, Gell lacks "understanding enough to judge the equity of the cause," an ingenuity that influences his military decisions. With "no piety or holiness" and "being a foul adulterer," who is "so unjust" and "without any remorse," Gell commands his soldiers "to plunder both honest men and cavaliers" (92). Hutchinson paints Gell as an irreligious and ignorant character foil for the virtuous John Hutchinson. Hutchinson can assure readers that her husband, John, never had "any personal acquaintance" with Gell but that there was only "that natural antipathy which is between good and evil" (92, 93).

The main difference between the two military leaders lies in their tactics. So while John Gell permits his troops "to commit all insolences without restraint" and is ineffective in directing his spies, John Hutchinson is an expert in military tactics who "employ[s] ingenious persons" and thus receives "the true state of things." In addition to

their differences in commanding soldiers, the men are also in opposition in regard to their participation in battle. John Hutchinson “[takes] up arms to defend the county” of Nottingham against “rude soldiers,” who “oftentimes” belonged to Gell. Gell, however, avoids actually participating in the war. Though he claims to be a heroic general and his soldiers once “held him up among a stand of pikes while they obtained a glorious victory,” Hutchinson claims that his closest friends assert that he is “not valiant” (93).

While Hutchinson is careful to depict the relationship between Gell and her husband as a classic tale of ‘bad vs. good,’ she is also concerned with how these two men appear in writing--Gell in the ephemeral diurnals and John in Hutchinson’s truthful *Memoirs* and God’s book of providences. Twice, in fact, Hutchinson mentions that Gell pays diurnals in order to paint him as a valiant war hero:

This man kept the diurnal makers in pension, so that whatever was done in any of the neighboring counties against the enemy was ascribed to him, and he hath indirectly purchased himself a name in story which he never merited, who was a very bad man, to sum up all in that word, yet an instrument of service to the Parliament in those parts (92).

Gell takes the credit for others’ victories, and pays extra to make his valor well-known. “Certain it is he was never by his good will in a fight, but either by chance or necessity,” asserts Hutchinson, “and that which made his courage the more doubted was the care he took, and expense he was at, to get it weekly mentioned in the diurnals” (93). John Hutchinson, however, shuns any earthly reward of fame, or “vainglory,” and fights for “virtue’s sake,” never “buy[ing] the flatteries of those scribblers” (93). In order to reinforce the moral rectitude of John Hutchinson, Hutchinson includes a story in which

one of “those scribblers” falsely attributes “the glory of an action” to Gell that he does not deserve (93). When John Hutchinson “rebuke[s]” the man for doing so, the man offers to “write as much for him the next week.” In response, John Hutchinson “scorn[s] his mercenary pen” and cautions him against writing falsehoods (93). Hutchinson gives such attention to how these men appear in print because she is trying to vindicate her husband to a post-Restoration culture. Indeed, John Hutchinson’s name appeared in Restoration print culture almost solely as a regicide. John had signed his name to Charles I’s death warrant. Charles II and his newly formed Parliament named John Hutchinson as regicide in the Act of Oblivion and Indemnity. In addition to legal documentation, John’s name appeared in popular texts at the time. Hutchinson relates that immediately after the Restoration, a small quarrel happens between John and a Dr. Plumtre, who “fearing” punishment for his corrupt business practices of almshouses, sought to win Nottingham (where John Hutchinson was governor during the Interregnum) for himself by “put[ting] by the Colonel with the basest scandals he and two or three of his associates could raise. Hill got a printed paper which he went about [with] him in those days, with his [i.e., the Colonel’s name] among others for a regicide” (276).<sup>316</sup> The print culture that fuels the Civil Wars spreads propaganda in favor of Gell; John Hutchinson does not fall trap to such. More than a statement of truth, Hutchinson’s depiction of her husband’s antithetical

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<sup>316</sup> Edmund Ludlow, a fellow regicide, authored a memoir such as Hutchinson’s in order to recount the wars. According to C.H. Firth, “Edmund Ludlow remembered him [John Hutchinson] as having exceeded most of the members of the court in his zeal to execute Charles; according to Mrs Hutchinson it was only after a long and serious debate and prayer that her husband signed the death warrant.” An analysis of the two memoirs would provide avenues for more scholarship on Hutchinson’s authorial strategies and narrative structure. C. H. Firth, “Ludlow, Edmund (1616/17–1692),” rev. Blair Worden, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17161> (accessed January 31, 2015).

relationship with Gell is a way to inform the post-Restoration culture of John's true participation in the war.

Equally at stake in post-Restoration culture is Hutchinson's reputation as an author who delivers a "naked, undressed narrative, speaking the simple truth" and the legacy of her providential narrative (16). In these diatribes against Gell, Hutchinson does not point attention to her authorial role; rather, she directs readers' attention to Gell's specious public reputation and indirectly reminds readers that Hutchinson is the holder of true John Gell—a man so deplorable that he must bribe the press. Just as the ignoble John Gell operates as a foil for the courageous John Hutchinson, the "scribblers" and "mercenary pen" of the diurnal writers operate in a similar fashion for Hutchinson.<sup>317</sup> Her use of the derogatory term "scribblers" implies that not only are these writers dishonest but also that they lack writing skills and what they write has no serious significance. Unlike those who write with a "mercenary pen," Hutchinson remains untainted by monetary rewards (a fact reinforced by the posthumous publication of the *Memoirs*); instead, similar to John Hutchinson's reasoning for fighting in the Civil War, she writes for "virtue's sake," a quite literal statement given her constant association of John Hutchinson with virtue in "To My Children." The oppositional roles of authorship between the fraudulent "scribblers" and the truthful Hutchinson make Hutchinson's *Memoirs* more valuable in moral principle than the diurnals. As readers, we are to

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<sup>317</sup> Mary Astell later would write that Milton was a "mercenary scribbler" who brought down Charles II. Astell, *An Impartial Enquiry into the Causes of Rebellion and Civil War*, 1704. See Erin Murphy, "Wartimes."

determine the authorial hand crafting the story, just as the godly are to reflect upon and detect God's providences that lead them through life.

While Hutchinson's treatment of John Gell and his erroneous public reputation is rather scathing, her depiction of Oliver Cromwell and his rise to Protectorate is just as unrelenting. Like other republicans, the Hutchinsons became disillusioned with Cromwell once he disbanded Parliament and became Protectorate in 1653, which were seen as acts of "a flagrant assertion of arbitrary power and personal ambition."<sup>318</sup> Republican disparagements of Cromwell were common, but specific to Hutchinson's critique is her need for providential order. As with John Gell and John Hutchinson's relationship, Hutchinson creates a similarly antagonistic relationship between Cromwell and John to demonstrate John Hutchinson's incorruptible nature and his loyalty to a providential, republican cause. To draw out the Cromwell's and John's inherent differences, Hutchinson uses a rhetoric of chaos, tyranny, and disorder to speak of Cromwell's rise to power juxtaposed with a rhetoric of stability and order in relation to John and his associates. In fact, Hutchinson makes readers aware that "the hand of God was mightily seen in prospering and preserving the Parliament [new republic], till Cromwell's ambition unhappily interrupted them" (236). Cromwell, more pointedly, shapes the republic into a mirror of the Stuart monarchy, which the republicans had worked so hard

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<sup>318</sup> Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric, and Politics, 1627-1660*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 299. Longfellow also notes that like other republicans, the Hutchinson's "were dissatisfied with Cromwell's management of government from the beginning of the new order in 1649" (197). Norbrook discusses a similar point in "Lucy Hutchinson Versus Edmund Waller," an article that analyzes Hutchinson's satiric response to Waller's *A Panegyrick to my Lord Protector*. Norbrook dates the poem to the late 1650s for numerous reasons, one of which being that "the poem echo[s] central themes of republican opposition to Cromwell in the 1650s" (66). See, "Lucy Hutchinson Versus Edmund Waller: An Unpublished Reply To Waller's *A Pangyrick To My Lord Protector*," *Seventeenth-Century* 11.1 (1996), 61-86.



to dispose of. Usurping the role as monarch, Cromwell cannot decide on who should be in Parliament; he continually assembles, re-assembles, and dismisses Parliament, causing great disorder. Within a couple of months, Cromwell “weeded” more than “150 godly officers out of the army,” which “almost changed from that godly religious army...into the dissolute army they had beaten” (256). From dismantling the political arena, Cromwell also corrupts his family, establishing them in a “principality” and allowing his daughter to marry a Cavalier and his son to become a Cavalier (256). On all accounts, Cromwell has turned ungodly, and as a result, “true religion was now almost lost, even among the religious party, and hypocrisy became an epidemical disease, to the sad grief of Colonel Hutchinson and all true-hearted Christians and Englishmen” (257). This resulting disorder harms the republican cause even to the extent that it allows royalists to creep back into court, hoping “for the restoring of their party” and “heightened all his disorders” (257). For Hutchinson, Parliament and Cromwell’s ‘court’ are more tyrannical than the deposed Stuart king.

Contrary to Cromwell, John Hutchinson is a great leader and “provid[es] orderly regulation of the people” (257). In his county, John is so respected and loved that men are saddened when he refuses to govern under Cromwell’s rule. John does work to reform his local community, and as Hutchinson reminds us, the community is glad for it. John provides for beggars and eradicates poverty. He even shuts down “unnecessary alehouses,” and among the decent alehouses, if John heard of any “disorder or debauchery” he refused to allow brewing to continue (254). Hutchinson’s most remarkable statement about John’s virtue is that it has the potential to change men’s

nature. As a “best ornament and an example of nature,” John “metamorphosed many evil people, while they were under his roof, into another appearance of sobriety and holiness” (254). John’s good deeds in the local community are also present “under his roof.” While Cromwell’s family members establish themselves as royalty, the Hutchinson family retires to their country home during “Oliver’s mutable reign” (255). Here, John collects art, tutors his children, and hones the art of falconry. He even wins the love of his “servants, tenants, and hired men” (255). In all aspects, John “maintained his authority” so that his patriarchal rule is characterized by “sober cheerfulness” and not “duties burdensome” (255). John, the perfect patriarch, adheres to order, and therefore sets an example of how family-state relations should operate.

Order, however, does not last forever. Or at least not in the fate of John Hutchinson. Soon after Cromwell’s prideful usurpation, he dies and his son Richard takes rule but fails the republican government. The Restoration takes place, and Hutchinson reflects this “change” in her narrative by emphasizing the chaotic nature surrounding the restored monarch, a sharp juxtaposition to God’s overarching providence that keeps John safe and eventually leads him to martyrdom (280). The “sun of liberty then set” upon the republic and “foulest mists” roll into England (274). These mists both obscure the Hutchinsons’ trust in fellow republicans and allow Lucy Hutchinson, in particular, a safe space to create her own narrative of orderly providence.

Upon the Restoration, John Hutchinson’s life is saved through “many providential circumstances” (281). Hutchinson’s writings, especially her infamous forged letter, are most prominent in these providences. The Act of Oblivion and Indemnity excuses John

Hutchinson from execution, imprisonment, and loss of estate, but strips him of his political station. John Hutchinson receives the punishment he does, in part due to his wife's forged letter.<sup>319</sup> Hutchinson reveals that John would have willfully martyred himself to save others, wanting to give himself up to the authorities, but she would not allow such: "therefore, herein only in her whole life, resolved to disobey him, and to improve all the affection he had to her for his safety, and prevailed with him to retire" (280). She badgers him enough that John eventually leaves "her own lodgings" for the "custody of a friend" (280). Meanwhile, the House of Commons votes that John Hutchinson should be exempt from execution but give up his estate, unless he yields to imprisonment. John and Lucy's friends urge the Hutchinsons to take the plea deal. Still Lucy refuses and takes the matter into her own hands. She "devised a way to try the House, and writ a letter in his name to the Speaker" (281). Finishing the letter, she seeks approval from her husband, but before reaching him, two gentlemen acquaintances stop her and apprise her of the House's good humor towards John, warning that such temperament will not last. If the Hutchinsons are to capitalize on the House's benevolence, they must do so now. Lucy, then, "writ her husband's name to the letter" (281). Lucy hesitates to hand the letter to these gentlemen, and just as she does so "God, to show that it was he, not they, sent two common friends, who had such good success that the letter was very well received" (281). Lucy's disobedience secures John's safety. Hutchinson, in narrating the tale, mentions God's ordained plan. Her disobedience at

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<sup>319</sup> Derek Hirst has recently questioned Hutchinson's claim of wavering doubt and the ways it leads to a false remembering of history. See, "Remembering a Hero." Lobo and Norbrook have offered responses (see note 12).

once breaks the hierarchy of patriarchal authority while simultaneously adhering to in order to secure John's safety.<sup>320</sup> Lucy's forged letter and Hutchinson's narration of it is Hutchinson's ultimate ghostly authorship. Acting as within the realm of overture as a feme covert, Lucy assumes her husband's authority and ghost-authors a letter;<sup>321</sup> Hutchinson's reflection upon her previous action places God at the center of the letter, its delivery, and reception--his divine hand guides Lucy's hand and the hands that deliver it. Forgery is forgiven.

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Lucy Hutchinson's authorial ghost provides the most appropriate closure for my dissertation. One, the ghostly, shadow-like Lucy Hutchinson reveals the nuances of female authorship in the early modern period because she offers a combination of the different models of embodied female authorship traced throughout this project. She represents maternal authorship, seen in Chapter 2. She is a wife and mother whose mind appropriately authors a recreation of her husband for her children's memory. Hutchinson, moreover, writes of a martyred body and a new national hero in which to root republican virtue at the time of monarchal Restoration, and shares with Bale and Askew the hierarchal, yet egalitarian god-ordained, patriarchal authorship. Finally, like Mariam, Desdemona, and Hermione, Lucy Hutchinson is a corpse whose ghost guides the reader through *Memoirs* (that is, if we read Hutchinson's claim literally). With Hutchinson's

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<sup>320</sup> My reading of the letter and parallels to Hutchinson's story of Rebecca deceiving Isaac in order to win the birth right for God's elect, Jacob. See Shook, "'Pious Fraud.'"

<sup>321</sup> Frances E. Dolan, *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2008).

ghost in the *Memoirs*, embodied female authorship has reached its full cycle--life in the maternal body, martyrdom, in the graveyard, and now in the afterlife. But I also selected Hutchinson to conclude my project because she enables a reconsideration of women's roles in narratives of authorship. Here, I want to offer some musings on women, the female body, and the narratives of authorship in the early modern period and in our twenty-first century contemporary moment.

The field of early modern women's writing has become mesmerized by the early modern woman but not so much the writing from early modern women. As Sarah C. E. Ross writes,

Scholarship on early modern women's writing has for decades centered on the figure of the early modern woman herself, [which are] historical entities that supplant the ghostly figure of Virginia Woolf's Judith Shakespeare, an embodied female parallel to the curiously bodiless William, whose texts are more real than he is. Because the study of early modern women's writing since the 1980s has to a large extent been driven by a desire to locate foremothers, the woman writer has most frequently been constructed as an essential and biographically determined concept.<sup>322</sup>

Ross's statement highlights a trend within the field of early modern women's writing to focus on the "woman" writer, which I think has been detrimental for understanding authorship. The "ghostly figure" of a Judith Shakespeare haunts us, but once we make Judith into a historical entity, questions abound about her "embodied female." How has the female body held back, or hindered, the woman writer? How did she write despite being in a patriarchal culture that always reminded her of her fallible

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<sup>322</sup> Sarah C.E. Ross, "Early Modern Women and the Apparatus of Authorship," *Parergon* 29.2 (2012), 1-8;

body? In the field of early modern women's writing, the female body is a specter haunting the narratives of authorship. The body is always there, but scholars are always trying to theorize about how women writers cope with their status as "women" and having a female body, the unbearable weight.

My dissertation, I hope, has offered an alternative to this predicament: not calling the female body a problem. Instead of considering the female body an "unbearable weight," let's make it tangible in our narratives of authorship. My dissertation has shown that models of authorship in the early modern period did not negate the female body; instead, the female body was at the center of authorship and was a necessary component of the rhetoric used to describe authorship. The female body facilitates authorship; it does not hinder authorship.

Early modern narratives of embodied female authorship, however pejorative or marginalized, exhibit the authorial potential for the female body, and I believe provide a model for understanding how authorship remains as a patriarchal, masculine construct in our contemporary moment. Despite the many waves of feminism, our contemporary society is far from a post-feminist movement. Authorship, especially, has felt the weight of the female body. Within the past couple of years, the coalition VIDA: Women in Literary Arts has brought national attention to the continued neglect of women within the literary circle by simply noting the unfortunate gender gap within *The New York Review of Books*, the most popular and prestigious American review venue. Most scandalous is David Gilmour, novelist and a literature professor at University of Toronto, who recently stated,

I'm not interested in teaching books by women. Virginia Woolf is the only writer that interests me as a woman writer, so I do teach one of her short stories....And when I tried to teach Virginia Woolf, she's too sophisticated, even for a third-year class. Usually at the beginning of the semester a hand shoots up and someone asks why there aren't any women writers in this course. I say I don't know women writers enough to teach them, if you want women writers go down the hall. What I teach is guys. Serious heterosexual guys. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Chekhov, Tolstoy. Real guy-guys. Henry Miller. Philip Roth.<sup>323</sup>

Gilmour's statement sparked a debate about women writers and rightfully so. Gilmour's sexist and homophobic comments undeniably demonstrate the continued necessity of studying women's writing--to read, study, and appreciate women and, as Gilmour's quip about "serious heterosexual guys" reminds us, LGBTQ persons as writers and valid contributors to literature. But, might we say that to some degree, the category "women's writing" gets in the way? Might Gilmour's refusal also be rooted in the erroneous ideology that to teach women writers (or other minority literary figures) requires embodying that particular space? Though, certainly as my dissertation has demonstrated, male writers develop theories of female authorship, and literature teachers, who happen to be women, surely never object to teaching Shakespeare because Shakespeare does not share their gender. Furthermore, a recent Twitter hashtag, #questionsformen, brings to light the absurd sexist questions by allowing women to ask men the same questions that women get asked precisely because women are women. Here a few examples:

Are you glad you waited until you were established in your career before becoming a father?

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<sup>323</sup> Interview by Emily M. Keeler, "David Gilmour on Building Strong Stomachs," *Hazlitt*. 25 Sept. 2013.

Would u be comfortable w only women weighing in on the debate about your productive organs? Or proposing policy/law re: it?

When enraged has anyone ever asked you if it's that time of the month? have you even been judged on the length of your pants?

When you die, do you expect your obituary to start with references to your attractiveness or lack thereof?

when you achieve something great, do you expect the female reporter to say, 'give us a twirl, who are you wearing?'

ever been called a 'boy gamer' while girls are just... Gamers?)<sup>324</sup>

In each of these questions, whatever a woman is doing or achieving, that action is always brought back to the female body. The last one is of particular relevance. The weirdness of a “boy gamer” resonates with the awkwardness of calling someone a “man writer.” The above questions seek to highlight that womanhood does not define one’s achievements. Neither should it define one’s writing. Yet how do we elevate women’s writing to equal status as men’s writing without labeling those writers as women--is this the ultimate, irresolvable paradox?

Our contemporary moment is attempting to rethink the female body as something that empowers agency, not hinders it. One telling example is a commercial that aired by the company *Always* during the 2015 Super Bowl, one of the most masculine annual

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<sup>324</sup> ([http://m.dailylife.com.au/dl-people/questionsformen-highlights-the-everyday-sexism-women-are-faced-with-20150204-135emz.html?&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=social&eid=socialn%3Afac-14omn0101-optim-nnn%3Apaid-25%2F06%2F2014-social\\_traffic-all-postprom-nnn-dailylife-o&campaign\\_code=nocode&promote\\_channel=social\\_facebook](http://m.dailylife.com.au/dl-people/questionsformen-highlights-the-everyday-sexism-women-are-faced-with-20150204-135emz.html?&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=social&eid=socialn%3Afac-14omn0101-optim-nnn%3Apaid-25%2F06%2F2014-social_traffic-all-postprom-nnn-dailylife-o&campaign_code=nocode&promote_channel=social_facebook))



sporting events. In the commercial, interviewers asked adolescents what it meant to act “like a girl.” What does it look like to “fight like a girl,” or “run like a girl? After humorous thirty seconds of people running like idiots, the interviewers then asked seven- and eight-year-old girls the same question. The result is that these girls do not think anything of the phrase “like a girl.” They run, and they punch. Naturally. The female body does not hinder.

Literary scholars, particularly of women’s writing, might take a cue from these young girls. Instead of thinking about how the female body weighs down women writers, we might consider embracing the female body. Is it the authorship narratives our contemporary moment inherits from the early modern period that makes us believe that the female body is an obstacle to overcome? It is increasingly important for us, as feminist scholars, to think about the narratives of authorship that we inherit from history, how we repeat those narratives, and how we fail to change the narratives by allowing them to be repeated. Let us retell the narrative: authorship requires the female body.

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